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James Frank Peters

1911

J. H. Riley
Falls Church,
Va.

MANUAL OF THE BIRDS OF ICELAND

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FOR

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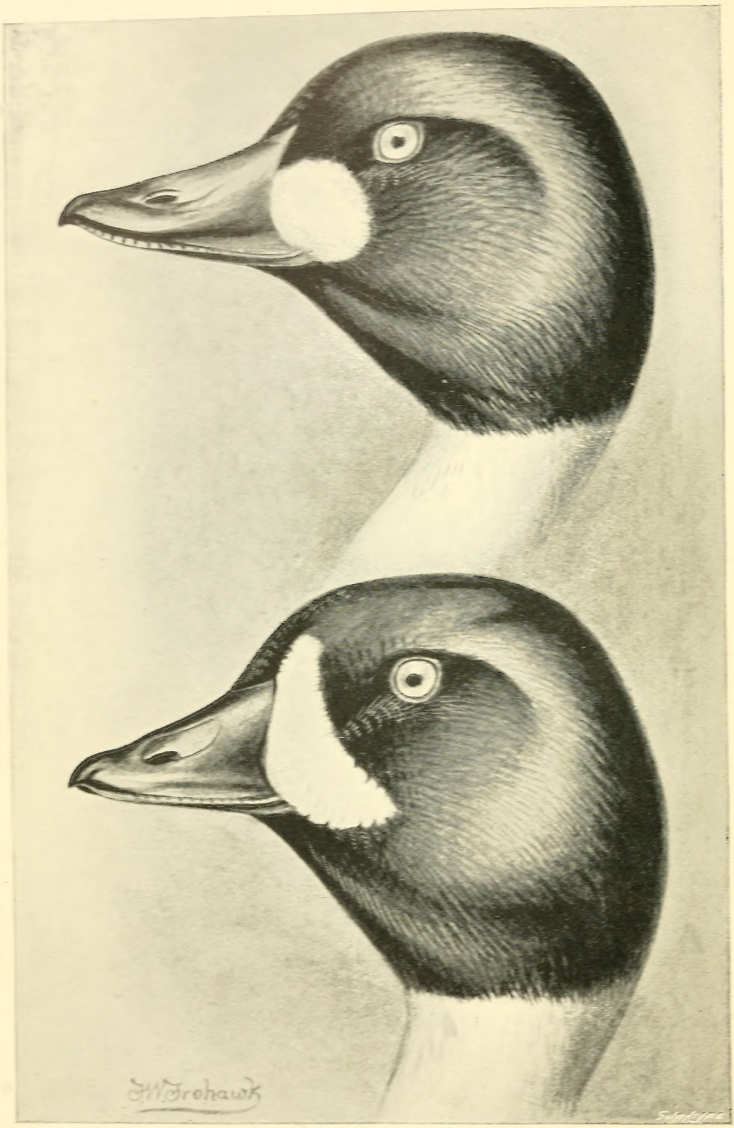

1. *Clangula Glaucion*, The Common Golden Eye

2. *Clangula Islandica*, Barrow's Golden Eye

(From Iceland Skins.)

SCALE: $\frac{1}{11}$.

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MANUAL

OF THE

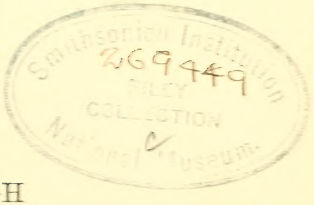
BIRDS OF ICELAND

ORROCKS

BY

HENRY H. SLATER, M.A., F.Z.S.

MEMBER OF THE BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION
AND RECTOR OF THORNHAUGH, NORTHANTS



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DAVID DOUGLAS, CASTLE STREET

1901

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INTRODUCTION

I HAVE been studying the Birds of Iceland for some fifteen years, ever since my first visit to that most interesting country in 1885, and have often felt the want, at first especially, of a handy manual on the subject. But there is no such thing in the English language.

As the available information is scattered, largely in driblets, amongst Icelandic, Danish, German, Latin, and English books and periodicals, it has occurred to me that it may be a convenience to English-speaking ornithologists to have this information revised and condensed in a handy form.

And as, too, many of my fellow-countrymen visit Iceland to fish, geologise, botanise, study their health, or do nothing in particular—according to their various ways of taking life—and a good many of them, from my experience of them on board ship, seem inclined to take more or less interest in the birds they meet with there, it is possible that a handy manual on the subject may, in their case also, supply what is at present a want.

I have not been considering the 'mere collector,' and have no wish to minister to his insatiable appetite for

the acquisition of as many egg-shells of rare birds as possible. If he makes his living by dealing in such things, it is unfair to condemn his objects altogether; but the worst offenders in this direction, I am afraid, are more or less well-to-do amateurs. In the case of the rarer species, therefore, I have purposely been as vague as possible in mentioning localities. The Great Auk is gone for ever—I do not think that the mere collector had very much to do with that—but there are two or three other species, the extinction of which as breeding birds in Iceland does not seem very far off. Amongst these are the Grey Phalarope, the Black-tailed Godwit, and the Little Auk; and the Iceland Falcon also is rapidly decreasing in numbers. In these and other cases, this is owing to the wholesale taking of their eggs, which the Close Season law in Iceland does not regulate in any way.

There is a great deal of literature bearing on the subject. It begins with Snorro Sturleson, who, with his nephew Olaf Thordsson, wrote the 'Younger,' or 'Prose Edda,' begun about 1150 and finished about 1250. It is chiefly mythological, but contains, amongst other things, a tolerably complete list of bird-names of the period. Most of the names are those in use in Iceland to-day, but there are a good many birds mentioned (*e.g.* the Kite, Cuckoo, Stork, Sparrow-hawk) which have never been seen in the country, so that, though valuable etymologically, the Younger Edda does not throw much light upon Icelandic ornithology as we understand the term. About the middle of the eighteenth

century a number of zoölogical works appeared in rapid succession—Johann Anderson's *Nachrichten* (1747), Horrebow's *Tilforladelige Efterretninger* (1752), Brünnich's *Ornithologia Borealis* (1764), Olafsson and Pálsson's *Reise* (1772), Olavius' *Oeconomisk Reyse* (1780), and Mohr's *Forsöy* (1786). But ornithology as an exact science began in Iceland with Friedrich Faber, still deservedly venerated in the country as 'Fugle Faber.' His *Prodromus* is a careful and, on the whole, reliable compendium, containing a great deal of detailed information on birds from his own personal knowledge, and was published in 1822. It (and the following) should be studied by every one who desires to master the subject. Of the numerous works since produced which bear upon it I wish to recommend Preyer and Zirkel's *Reise* (1862), Shepherd's *North-West Peninsula* (1867), and, last but not least, Professor Newton's Appendix to Baring-Gould's *Iceland*, etc. (1863), which I, personally, have found extremely valuable and suggestive. Of all the papers in the various periodicals, those specially useful will be found to be indicated by an asterisk in the list given on pages xix.-xxiii. I should like, however, to single out for special mention those by Herra Benedikt Gröndal, as having been of great service to me. There are a good many works on Iceland which treat more or less of ornithology (as of everything else one can think of) without materially adding to our knowledge of it, though they do provide us with a variety of fancy problems.

As to Guide-books, there is a very fair one by

Mr. W. G. Lock. It is undated, but was published, I believe, early in the eighties. As far as topography and outfit are concerned, it is very good, but I must warn the intending visitor against placing too implicit a reliance upon the amount of sport which it will otherwise induce him to expect everywhere—and also against considering it a competent ornithological guide. Two birds are mentioned (with Latin names too!)—the Great Snipe and Bean Goose—of which the former has never even been suggested by any ornithologist as occurring in Iceland, and the latter has never been satisfactorily ascertained to do so. And Mr. Lock has been so completely misled by the variations, seasonal and sexual, in the plumage of the Rock Ptarmigan (the only wild Gallinaceous bird in Iceland) as to assert, quite erroneously, that the Willow Grouse and Common Ptarmigan are to be found there, besides a variety of hybrid forms. This sort of statement is apt to discount the value of any book seriously—and it would have been quite easy for the writer to find out what competent ornithologists had written. Another and much slighter guide-book has since appeared, in which all these misstatements are copied and stereotyped. The bird-lore in Sir Richard Burton's *Ultima Thule* is also untrustworthy. That writer goes astray on the subject of the Rock Ptarmigan too (vol. i. p. 172), and probably led the writers of the guide-books off the road. He also suggests Bewick's Swan as an Icelandic bird (ii. 313), of which no evidence whatever exists; and by speaking of '*Sula Bassana*' in one line and '*Sula alba*'

in another, would convey to a reader unversed in synonymy the idea that two Gannets are found in Iceland.

Foreigners usually make fun of our linguistic abilities, and not, I am afraid, without reason. Many of us seem to consider ourselves entitled to be a law unto ourselves in the matter of the pronunciation and spelling of foreign names and words. All the same, it is just as excruciating to hear an Englishman speaking of 'Rikkavik' or 'Rykyvik,' as it would be to hear him singing out of tune. Besides, there is no reason why a visitor to Iceland should not master the general rules of pronunciation on the passage out, so that there is no absolute necessity for him to set everybody's teeth on edge when he gets there. As to misspelling, nothing can, I fear, excuse what was recently described as 'our lordly disregard for foreign ideas of orthography.' Herra Gröndal is abundantly justified in ridiculing the spelling of Icelandic proper names in a recent paper in the *Ibis*, in which there appear to be over thirty errors of the sort. But I do wish that the Royal Geographical Society, when issuing their recent map to illustrate Dr. Thoroddsen's paper (1899), had put in the names in Icelandic, instead of Anglo-Dano-Icelandic. As far as accuracy of surveying goes, this map is far in front of any previous one of the district; and for the credit of British workmanship, I am only sorry that the nomenclature is not equal to the rest.

Gunnlaugsson's map is still the only one with any title to completeness, though it has obvious defects,

one of the worst being that some of the out-of-the-way districts apppear to be charted down from memory, or at second hand. If our Royal Geographical Society will continue to publish more accurate surveys of such districts they will be doing good service, and preparing the way for a really good map in the future. Let me beg them, however, to put Icelandic names in Icelandic. Lock's sketch-map is good, as far as it goes, and he is scrupulously accurate in place-names.

I cannot myself expect that I have altogether escaped errors; no one, without a very extended residence in the country, could hope to verify all the statements which a book of this kind is expected to contain; but I can honestly say that I have spared no pains in obtaining as correct information as was possible under the circumstances — and have taken great trouble, especially, over the orthography of the Icelandic names—and can only hope that my modest venture may be as useful to students of the Iceland bird-fauna as I sincerely desire it to be. For the help of visitors to the country who are interested in the subject without being technically ornithological, I have given a brief description of the plumage, except in the case of common and universally known birds—and also in the case of some of the Waders, which would require several distinct phases of plumage, each characterised by very minute differences, to be described under each species. I have in such cases referred generally to the breeding dress only. I have also given a rough description, in most cases, of the nest and eggs. These,

I hope, will enable visitors to recognise most of the species they may meet with: any which they fail to come to a decision upon should be carefully preserved, with exact details of place, date, and anything else noteworthy, and be submitted to some competent ornithologist on their return home.

I have to express my grateful acknowledgments to a good many persons—to Professor Alfred Newton, to Mr. Howard Saunders, to Mr. J. E. Harting, to Mr. Benedikt Gröndal of Reykjavik, to Mr. F. H. Waterhouse, our helpful librarian at the Zoölogical Society, to Mr. J. G. Millais, to Mr. P. Nielsen of Eyrarbakki, to my friend Mr. St. Stephensson of Akureyri, and to others, including my companions in Iceland at various times, from all of whom I have had assistance in different ways which has been of the greatest value to me.

Finally, I should like it to be understood that all dates subsequently given for the appearance in, or departure from, Iceland—or the nesting—of any particular species, are merely approximate. A late cold spring, or an early winter, will modify them considerably.

The measurements of birds require a word of explanation also. The 'length' of a bird is the measurement (with a tape or otherwise) from the point of the bill to the end of the longest feather in the tail taken in a straight line, and in the flesh—not from a skin, which is often untrustworthy. The wing measure is similarly taken from the 'shoulder' (which, however,

corresponds anatomically to our wrist) to the end of the longest primary, or wing-quill. This can, of course, be taken equally well from a skin, as the wing does not vary by manipulation.

'Resident' is a term applied to a species indicating that some individuals (but not necessarily the same ones) are to be found in the country all the year round.

A 'summer visitor' is a bird which arrives in the country by migration from abroad some time during the spring, and stays till the autumn. Some species pass through the country only, mostly along the coasts, and in spring, on their way to their breeding-grounds farther north, and return in the same way during the autumn, passing a few days only in the country on each occasion. These are frequently termed 'birds of passage,' *e.g.* the Knot, Curlew Sandpiper, etc. Some which breed infrequently in Iceland, as the Grey Phalarope, are more birds of passage, in reality, than summer visitors, as many more individuals merely pass through on migration than remain to breed.

Thornhaugh Rectory,
Wansford.

CLOSE SEASON FOR BIRDS IN ICELAND

(*Law dated December* 16, 1885.)

By this law Terns, Snow-Buntings, Meadow-Pipits, Wagtails, Wheatears, Thrushes, Wrens, and Finches are not to be killed at all. All other birds, excepting Eagles, Falcons, Merlins, Ravens, Skuas, Large and Small Gulls, Saw-billed Ducks, Divers, and cliff birds (Guillemots and Razorbills), are protected from April 1 till July 20; Puffins from May 10 till June 20; Petrels (including Fulmars) from March 1 till August 10. Neither net nor gun are to be used in taking Puffins or Petrels.

No restriction is therefore made in the matter of taking the eggs of any bird, except that those of the Eider Duck are protected by another enactment. Consequently the eggs of all birds are systematically taken all over the country—partly to eat, partly, in the case of rarer birds, to sell to foreigners. If the Althing does not intervene, and regulate in some measure the taking of eggs—and before long—several species must be exterminated, as at present they can hardly succeed in rearing young in Iceland at all.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF ICELANDIC NAMES.

Vowels.

A. When short, as in English—*e.g.* 'Hafsúla' (Gannet).

'A. Almost equal to *ow* in English—*e.g.* 'grágás' (Grey Goose)='grow gowse.'

Æ. Like a long English *i*—gaes (Goose)='geis.'

E. As the short English *e*—sefönd (Grebe)='sef-und.'

'E. Like the long English *e* in 'there.'

I. As in English—with a trifle more of *e* sound.

'I. Like *ee*—dílaskarfur (Shag)='deela sk.'

O. As in English, 'not.'

'O. The long English *o*, as in 'wrote.'

Ö. Like the French *eu*, the Danish *ø*, or the Swedish *ö*; örn (Eagle)='eurne' in French.

U. Like our *u* in 'use.'

'U. Like *oo*; Brimdúfa (Harlequin Duck)='brimdōōfă.'

Y. Like a short *i*, with which it is often interchangeable. The last example would be pronounced exactly the same whether spelt 'brym-' or 'brim-.'

AU. Like the French *eu*. Straumönd (Harlequin) sounds like the French 'Streumund.'

EI } Like '*ay*'—so that Reykjavik is pronounced
EY } 'Raykyavik'; 'heiði'='haythy.'

Consonants

are mostly pronounced as in English, and ours is the only other European language which preserves the true *th* sounds. The exceptions are :—

C is always hard, like *k* ; never=*s* as in English.

Ð, or ð (called eð). Like the *th* in 'bathe,' with a subdued *d*-sound in it. To write airily in English 'brodir' for 'broðir' (brother) is therefore simply preposterous.

F. Usually as in English ; but before *l*, *n*, ð, or *t*, it takes the sound of *b*, thus 'hrafn' (raven) is pronounced 'hrabn' ; a terminal *f* is also apt to melt into *v*.

G. Like the English hard *g* (that before *n*, *v*, or *u*). When preceded by a vowel and followed by another soft vowel or *j*, *g* is sounded like *y*. 'Nefboginn' ('bow-shaped bill'), a name Professor Newton gives for the Curlew, would be pronounced 'Nevboyinn.'

H is always aspirated.

J. Like the Continental *j*, or our *y*.

K. As in English before a consonant, the vowels *a*, *o*, *u*, or at the end of a word. Before *e*, *i*, *y*, *ae*, *ö*, *ey*, or *ei*, a slight *j*-sound is introduced, as in the English 'cure.'

L. As in English ; but when doubled='dtl.' 'Hávella' (Long-tailed Duck)='Howedtla.'

M. As in English.

N. As in English, but often dropped. 'Vatnsönd' (Merganser)='Vatsund.'

P. As in English, except before *t* when it becomes an *f*. 'Alpt (swan)='álft.' No word beginning with *p* is of genuine Norse origin.

Q is used before *v*, and almost=*k*.

R. As in English, except when following a consonant at the end of a word, when it has the sound of *ur*. 'Hafskúmr' (Great Skua)='Hafskúmur,' and may be written so.

S, **T**. As in English.

Þ, þ (called 'Thorn'). An aspirated *th*, as Ð (ð) is an aspirated *d*. It is pronounced as we pronounce the Greek *θ* and our *th* (in 'think'). Like Ð, þ is never doubled.

V. As in English, but is sometimes softened into *w*, *e.g.* 'Hávella' (Longtail)='Howedtla.'

X. As in English.

Z. Seldom used, and then standing for a combination of other consonants (*e.g.* 'Kvazt'='Kvaðst'; 'Beztr'='Betstr'), and has the sound of *s*.

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THE BIRDS OF ICELAND.

Turdus iliacus, Linn. Redwing.

Native name: 'Skógarþröstur' (Wood-thrush).

A summer visitant in considerable numbers, appearing as early as March, but usually somewhat later, and remaining in the country till the beginning of October. Odd individuals are to be seen as late as November. It frequents birch woods, or birch scrub *faute de mieux*. Most of the Iceland birch woods are now reduced to the condition of scrub, partly by wasteful felling, partly by carelessly allowing sheep to injure the young trees. In the autumn (August) Redwings visit the gardens around farm-houses far from any birch woods. I saw nests with five and four fresh eggs, and also young birds already out of the nest, on June 27, 1885, in the north; also, on August 17, 1894, young birds barely fledged. Even when nothing happens to the first laying (*i.e.* in the shape of a raven) I fancy that a second brood is sometimes produced. The nest is usually placed on the ground at the foot of a birch tree or bush—sometimes, where two or three stems rise from a 'stool,' in the middle of them a few inches above the ground—sometimes

in a birch fork quite a yard from the ground. The nest is made of fine twigs, usually of the birch, mixed with grass and moss, then lined with mud or earth, then again with fine grass, like the Blackbird's, of which the eggs also are a small copy, but usually a trifle greener in ground-colour. Sometimes three eggs only form a sitting, but four or five is the usual number.

As this bird is so well known, and is, moreover, the only thrush likely to be met with in Iceland, I have not thought it worth while to give a description of the plumage; but I may mention that the English name refers to the bright chestnut patch on either side of the breast, and partly under the wing, and that any thrush found without these should be carefully preserved.

The low chuckle of the Redwing is a familiar autumn and winter experience in England; the true song we never hear in this country. It may have been, as Howard Saunders remarks in his *Manual*, 'unduly eulogised,' but it has been unduly depreciated too; and I am quite unable to follow Professor Newton when he alludes to it (Baring Gould, p. 404) as a 'monotonous twitter,' though I admit a certain sameness. But the tone is as melodious as that of the Song Thrush, if it is as wanting in variety as that of the Missel Thrush, and to hear it on a fine sunny morning in Iceland is delightful; its wildness harmonises so exactly with the rocky birch-strewn hillsides, and yet with the Spring brightness, too, that it

conveys to the hearer a sense of agreeable proportion. There is also a harsh note, uttered when any one approaches the nest or young, and usually from the top of a birch bush.

Turdus pilaris, Linn. FIELDFARE.

Native name: none, but Herra Gröndal seems to have christened it 'Gráþröstur,' an Icelandic version of the Norse 'Graatrost' (Grey-thrush).

A rare straggler. Gröndal (*Skýrsla*, p. 36) gives two instances of its occurrence: at Reykjavik, on December 6, 1885, and in December 1894. I have heard of no others.

Turdus merula, Linn. BLACKBIRD.

No native name: Herra Gröndal's 'Svartþröstur' is only a translation of the Danish 'Sort drossel.'

There are one or two occurrences on record, several of which seem dubious. Gröndal (in *Verzeichniss*, p. 357) mentions, rather doubtfully, an occurrence 'in the east,' in 1877, and Nielsen (*Ornis*, 1887, p. 157) one at Eyrarbakka on December 22, 1877. There are two specimens in the museum at Reykjavik, and we may suppose it to be a rare straggler to Iceland. I ought to take this opportunity to remark that all the specimens in the above museum are not quite in the position of Cæsar's wife—beyond suspicion. For example, there are two Common Linnets, *Linota Canna-*

bina (Linn.), in that institution, one labelled correctly, the other named 'Auðnutitlingur' (Mealy Redpoll). The occurrence of the Common Linnet in Iceland has never even been suggested by any one.

Saxicola œnanthe (Linn.). Wheatear.

Native names: 'Steindepill,'—also 'Steinklappa,' and 'Gradiloður,' but I never heard either of the latter used, and Gröndal mentions neither.

A summer visitor, plentiful in most parts of the island, arriving about the middle of May, and usually leaving in the beginning of August, though a few may be met with as late as the middle of the next month. The nest, made of fine grass with a few ptarmigan feathers, is placed in much the same situations as in England—in crevices of rocks, heaps of stones, etc.,—and five eggs seem more usual in Iceland than six; sometimes there are four only. Their colour is of a clear pale blue. The bird may easily be recognised by the conspicuous white patch over the tail, and by its note, a sort of 'tick-tick,' much like what might be produced by knocking two pebbles together, from which the bird gains its vernacular name in most European countries. This is usually uttered while the bird is perched upon, or is just leaving, a stone top. In summer dress the male is of a clear grey with black points, the female drab.

In the Younger Edda of Snorro Sturleson, date about 1233, the name is 'Steindelfr.'

[**Ruticilla titys** (Scopoli). Black Redstart.

Native name: none.

Herr Preyer (see his *Reise*) believed that he saw a pair of Black Redstarts, on June 17, 1860, on the island of Viðey, close to Reykjavik, which appeared to be breeding in the chapel-wall. No one else has had a similar experience. Now most migrants travel in flocks or streams, the males, as is noticeably the case with the Common Redstart (*R. Phœnicurus*), a few days in advance of the females. We are to suppose, therefore, that a single male found its way to the neighbourhood of Reykjavik in that year only followed, a few days later, by a single female, and that they paired in the usual manner and proceeded to prepare for the cares of a family. I would not assert that such a thing is impossible; but, when it is looked at in detail, it is, to say the least, 'Jules-Vernesque.' And Viðey is not even a 'coral island'!]

Troglodytes borealis, Fischer.
Northern Wren.

Native names: 'Músarbroðir.' Professor Newton also adds 'Músarrindill,' but I have never heard this used, though 'Rindill' is the ancient Eddaic name.

This species is confined to Iceland and the Faeroes, the Icelandic individuals being larger than the Faeroese, as the wren of St. Kilda marks a faint

approach to the Faeroe bird. The Northern Wren in Iceland has always been a puzzle to me. Every one knows about it, and a good many Icelanders believe they have seen it with more or less frequency—and the knowledge which Icelanders have of their country's birds in general puts to shame the average attainments in this line of English country-folk, gentle as well as simple. But on my occasional visits during the last fifteen years, I have never been able to catch a glimpse of this bird, nor of even an old nest. And though I offered ten kroner for the bird, or the nest with eggs, for years, it was all in vain. One Icelander informed me that it nested in birch trees at some height from the ground—but he was no doubt confusing it with the Mealy Redpoll. Another sent me with great confidence a nest and eggs, which proved on arrival to be those of a Meadow Pipit.

The last historical occurrence I could find was that of William Proctor, once curator of the Durham University Museum, who taught me to stuff birds in my youth. In his quaint manuscript Journal, which Professor Newton kindly lent me recently, the following entry occurs: 'Tusday 1st August (1837) I started for Granstaer (Grenjaðarstaðir) as it is called (from Reykjalið, apparently) and shot some Ptarmigan and *Little Wren* and two Merlin Hawks on my way.' He observes a little further on: 'Kittiwren length $4\frac{3}{4}$ inch breadth $7\frac{1}{2}$ inch.'

I was unwillingly coming to the conclusion that the Iceland wren must be, at all events, verging on

extinction, especially since Preyer (*Reise*) described it as being 'nicht häufig' in 1860. On my arrival at Reykjavik, however, in June 1900, Herra Gröndal assured me that he had had the bird sent to him in the flesh within the last few years; and Governor Stephensson, the brother of my Iceland 'guide, philosopher, and friend'—and Madame Stephensson also—informed me that they had certainly seen it not many years since.

By good fortune, we met with it ourselves, a week or two later. Mr. Dugmore and I were searching a scrubby birch wood, many miles from Reykjavik, whereof the trees, which were few, and the bushes, which were many, grew on the outskirts of an ancient and ragged lava-flow of great extent. We were at the moment hoping to find a belated nest of the Redwing with eggs, which were a desideratum in Dugmore's cabinet, when, all at once, I heard a wren sing, and the effect was almost as startling for the moment as if a native had attempted to 'snipe' me from behind a neighbouring boulder. I stopped dead—but the rest of us did not, and the mischief was done. Though I waited some time, the bird was obviously startled, and had flown elsewhere. But I was confident that my ears had not played me false, and till late in that afternoon we walked that rugged tract; I with my ears pricked up, so to speak, all the time. Moreover, I looked at every rock-face and mossy cranny in the many little dingles there, in the hope of seeing a wren's nest. And I found one—an old one, but the real

thing—in a rock-face partly clothed with trailing vaccinium growing from ledges. Later on the same day, I found another, quite a new one, in a similar place, made of moss, and exactly like our own wren's nest, though with a somewhat larger aperture—but, alas, no eggs!

Being very hot, and somewhat tired after five hours of very rough walking, we sat down on a moss cushion in a shady place some thirty yards from the nest. And I was almost on the verge of forty winks, when—the wren's song again. Somewhat louder, even, than that of our Kitty, and equally jubilant. A careful approach only gave me a view of an anxious Redwing, clucking its warning from the top of a birch bush. 'What a wary little skulker it must be!' I said to myself as I subsided amongst the bushes. I daresay half an hour passed, and again a burst of song from a new direction. I crept towards it, and this time saw the bird sitting on the top of a pinnacle of rock, standing above a small barren plateau of ragged lava blocks between which were patches of grey moss and lichen. I could get no nearer than forty yards without showing myself, which I dared not do; so tried a dust-shot cartridge in my choked barrel, and saw the bird fall. We ran to the spot but only found cracks between the lava blocks, and a feather or two. So we started to 'shift' the stones, and had not moved many before out from under our feet fluttered the 'Mouse's brother,' and, like a bolted rabbit, dived into another crack a couple of yards off. We proceeded to the spot, and started

shifting again, but this time I stood with my gun ready. Shortly, out came the bird again, and made, very shakily, for a rock some twelve yards off. I gave it all the law I dared, and fired just as it reached the rock, and saw it stagger against the side of a hole and fall in. Unfortunately the hole opened directly into a long narrow sloping crevasse (if I may use the word of lava rock) which appeared to go straight down to New Zealand, or somewhere even warmer.

We walked a good deal more, and each heard the wren again, but got no sight of it. So we returned to the manse where we were staying—I, at least, with feelings of keen disappointment: I detest above all things failing to gather any creature whose life I have taken. My friends kindly insisted upon our intended departure being put off for another day, so next morning found us foraging the lava and birch tract again. We walked much of yesterday's ground 'without a whimper,' and then proceeded in a new direction. I was rather ahead, and was looking for the nest of a pair of Phalaropes beside a little tarn, as Dugmore had never taken their eggs, when, fifty yards to my front, amongst the lava and birch scrub, rang out the well-known song. I went quietly back to Dugmore, and together we advanced cautiously, taking opposite sides of a lava ridge from which I judged the sound had come. I heard Dugmore shoot, and had the pleasure —at last—of handling an Iceland specimen of the Northern Wren.

All this excitement and fuss about a little bird will

seem tolerably ridiculous to the jaded modern sportsman who cannot interest himself in anything less than a three or four hundred-head shoot, but I have never been able (and my experience in these directions has been a fairly varied one) to feel the same keenness of interest about the fate of a stag, or anything else in the game way, as I did about that little insignificant-looking bird which I have found elusive in so many ways.

I collected further information about it from the inhabitants of those parts. They pay little or no attention (though extremely observant in other ways) to the notes of birds, so were unable to tell me anything of its proceedings during the summer, when, moreover, they are busy about other things, and anxious to make hay during the comparatively brief time during which the sun shines effectively. The bird is, besides, secluded at that time in the recesses of wild lava-beds and birch scrub—is a most inveterate skulker—and would never come under the attention of any one who did not hear and recognise its note.

In winter, however, they tell me, they see a good deal more of it, as it drops its timidity under the pressure of hunger, and draws round the farms when the country is covered with snow, to feed on such scraps and insects as it can find about, and actually in, the farm buildings. And there can be no reasonable doubt that the great increase of domestic cats in Iceland of recent years is leading, as in the Faeroes, very rapidly to its extermination. It is undoubtedly very scarce and local in Iceland now, and will to all

appearance suffer the extinction which, until 1900, I was inclined to believe had already overtaken it.

My bird is a male, and, judging from the measurements given by Dr. Sharpe in the British Museum Catalogue of Birds (vol. vi. p. 272), Icelandic examples are larger than Faeroese, viz.:—

	Total length.	Culmen.	Wing.	Tail.	Tarsus.
a. Iceland (Proctor), .	4·75	...	...	...	...
b. Iceland, H. H. S., ♂, 13, VI. 1900, in the flesh, . .	4·85	0·55	2·25	1·8	0·8
c. Thorshavn, Faeroes, ♂, XI. 1880, in British Museum,	4·2	0·55	1·75	1·4	0·8
d. English Wren, ♂,	4·0	0·55	1·9	1·5	0·75

The difference in length of bill, in favour of *T. borealis*, usually relied on as a distinctive feature, is, as shown by Dr. Sharpe and confirmed by my specimen, non-existent.

The plumage, as I remarked to my companion the moment we picked the bird up, suggests much more that of *T. fumigatus* (Temm.) of Japan, than our comparatively un-barred English wren. I may add that the sternum of the Iceland male is a good deal larger and stouter than that of *T. Europæus*, and, measured underneath from the rostrum to the posterior metasternal border, is $\frac{1}{8}$-in. longer. The coracoids are somewhat longer and stouter also, but the scapulæ of the two species show hardly any difference.

Motacilla alba, Linn. White Wagtail.

Native names: 'Máríalla,' 'Maríu-erla,' 'Mariur-titlingur,' sometimes, erroneously, 'grá-titlingur,' a name which belongs to the Meadow Pipit. The prefix to the first three names appears to be a Christian apology to the Virgin Mary. I gather from Gröndal that there is reason to suppose that in pre-Christian days this bird was called 'Friggjar ellda' (? erla) = the 'erle' of Frigga.

A common summer visitor, arriving in April and leaving in September; flocking, preparatory to its departure, in August. I have found fresh eggs on June 13, young birds out of the nest on June 11; but all dates of this kind are largely approximate in Iceland, and vary considerably according to the altitude of the place in question, and the earliness, or otherwise, of the spring. We noticed White Wagtails near Myvatn, in 1884, perching on willow bushes near their nest like Whinchats in England. This bird is not allowed to be killed at any time of year by the Close Season Act (see p. xv.). The nest is of grass and fine roots, lined usually with pony's hair, seldom with feathers, and is placed in a hole in a bank, or turf-wall, or in a rock crevice. The eggs, four to five in number, are white, thickly and finely spotted with grey, and are not distinguishable from those of our Pied Wagtail (*M. lugubris*, Temm.), of which this species is the continental representative. The White Wagtail usually nests near human habita-

tions, but occasionally on lake islets, or amongst wild lava tracts at a considerable distance from any house.

The bird is so like the Pied Wagtail in plumage that it does not seem necessary to give a detailed description, more especially as there is no other bird in Iceland with which it can well be confounded; but I may mention that the male always has a grey, not a black back, as in the Pied Wagtail, and the grey tints are somewhat lighter and clearer. Length 7½ inches, wing 3½ inches.

Anthus pratensis (Linn.). Meadow Pipit.

Native names: 'Grá-titlingur,' 'þúfu-titlingur.' ('Titlingur' is a name applied to any small twittering bird; 'grá,' of course, means 'grey'; 'þúfa' is a tussock.)

An abundant summer visitor, common everywhere from May till September. I have found nests with fresh eggs from June 25 till July 15. In Iceland, as an apparent set-off to the dangers of the spring and autumn flight across the turbulent North Atlantic, the Meadow Pipit enjoys an entire immunity from the attentions of the Cuckoo, which is such a pest to it in Britain. As it seems to form the favourite prey of the Merlin, however, it is 'not all beer and skittles' in Iceland.

The nest is placed on a bank-side amongst some trailing shrub, or under a grassy tussock, and is made of fine dead grass with a horsehair lining, and some-

times a few ptarmigan feathers, which no small bird in Iceland seems able to resist. The eggs (four to five) are greyish white or light brown in ground colour, more or less spotted and blotched with various shades of brown, often with a fine black irregular line, or two, as if scribbled with a pen, near the larger end. The bird is well known, but it may be well to describe it as slender-billed; light buff below, brown above; spotted boldly on the chest, broadly on the back with very dark brown. It has a very long hind-claw (longer than the toe it concludes), and is $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, wing 3 inches. The outer tail-feather on either side is half white, which shows very conspicuously when the bird is on the wing.

[**Oriolus galbula**, Linn. Golden Oriole.

Native name: none.

The only recorded occurrence of this bird in Iceland is to be found in Herr Lütken's *Jahresbericht über die ornith. Beobachtungsstat. in Dänemark* (*Ornis*, 1895, p. 97), where it is stated that an adult male was met with on the 'north coast of Iceland' in 'mid-December, 1843.' Both the time of year and the place suggest a legitimate surprise.]

Hirundo rustica, Linn. Swallow.

Native name: 'Landsvala.'

A summer visitor of extremely rare and irregular occurrence. I have never seen one in Iceland (nor

have most Icelanders), and there is no recorded instance of their breeding. In recent times, Herra Gröndal (*Verzeichn.*, p. 356) mentions how a pair visited Reykjavik in 1875, and commenced to build a nest, which came to nothing; also an odd bird on May 12, 1881, also near Reykjavik, which was caught. He also mentions (*Ornith. Bericht*, 1887-88, in *Ornis*, 1897, p. 89) that he saw one on June 15, 1887, near Reykjavik, and one the next day. I have heard of no occurrences except in the south.

Chelidon urbica (Linn.). House Martin.

Native name: 'Bæjarsvala.'

The same remarks apply to this species as to the preceding, except that its occurrences are even fewer. Some birds appear to be far better known in Icelandic literature than the frequency of their appearances in the country would seem to warrant, and have special vernacular names which seem to be universally known. It seems very likely that this may be due to their having a well-known place in the poetical literature of the country, which is very extensive, and wherein I must confess my education to have been grievously neglected. This species and the last are examples of birds that every one knows about, though few have seen; an even stronger one is the Cuckoo, which has never been known to occur in Iceland, and yet few Icelanders will be ignorant (they almost universally have a literary turn) of the Icelandic name of the

Cuckoo, 'Gaukr'—which is Eddaic, and yet, though the bird is non-existent in Iceland, well known to-day.

Linota linaria (Linn.). Mealy Redpoll.

Native name: 'Auðnutitlingur' (? Desert Twitterer).

I cannot imagine why this species is so often described as rare in Iceland. It is a common resident in the north (the numbers probably diminished during the winter by partial migration), though less common southwards. Wherever there are birch woods in the north, there you may find the Mealy Redpoll in more or less abundance. I have found it breeding as far south as the Mýra Sýslu, and Herra Nielsen has had the same experience near Eyrarbakka, in the extreme south-west (see *Ornis*, 1887, p. 157; *Skýrsla*, 1894-95, p. 37, etc.) I have seen nests with eggs in Fnjoskádalur, from June 27th. The nest is placed, sometimes, in a fork of a birch tree, five to six feet above the ground; sometimes actually on the ground, like the nest of the Twite [*L. flavirostris* (Linn.)]. It is made of fine birch twigs mixed with sheep's wool, and lined first with grass and wool, and finally with a profusion of white ptarmigan's feathers—a very neat and beautiful nest. Six eggs are the general number, sometimes there are only five. They are white, spotted, chiefly at the larger end, and often in the form of a zone, with light grey-brown and umber.

The bird is light buffish-white below, with a sooty chin; brown above, mingled with white streaks (whence

'mealy'): tail forked at the end, and the feathers mealy-edged; a rose-coloured cap on the crown (except in very young birds), and in adult males, a lovely rosy patch on either side of the breast, which, in very fine examples, meet and form one; a trace of rosy also on the brown-streaked rump. Length 5 inches, wing $2\frac{3}{4}$ to 3 inches.

Linota hornemanni, Hollböll.
Greenland Redpoll.

Native name: none.

Almost all British ornithological writers, except Professor Newton in Baring-Gould, have gone completely astray about this bird, and have put it down as the ordinary form of Redpoll in Iceland—*e.g.*, Dresser (*B. of Europe*, iv. 42), Sharpe (*B. M. Cat. Birds*, xii. 257), Seebohm (*B. B.*), Saunders (*Man. of B. Birds*, p. 181).

I would call attention—yet once more—to my remarks on the subject in the *Ibis* (1886, pp. 46-47). *L. linaria*, Linn., is the common resident species of Iceland, and the Greenland Redpoll is a rare occasional visitor, probably in the winter only. Mr. Hancock's specimen, in fact, is the only genuine specimen of the latter that has come under my notice; and I have no information as to when, where, and by whom it was obtained. I have never succeeded in getting hold of another.

L. hornemanni is a large Arctic form of *L. exilipes* of Coues. Both these have the white rump, in adult

birds, pure and unspotted. In *L. linaria*, *L. hollboelli* (a large Asiatic form of the former), and *L. rufescens* (our English Lesser Redpoll), the white rump is streaked longitudinally with brown. The total length of *L. hornemanni* is $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches; *L. linaria* seldom reaches 5 inches. The wing, measured when closed, from the 'shoulder' to the tip in a straight line, is, in *L. hornemanni*, from $3\frac{1}{8}$ to nearly $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; in *L. linaria*, from $2\frac{3}{4}$ to barely 3 inches. The male Greenland Redpoll wears very little indeed of the rosy colour on the breast, none on the rump, usually only on the crown. Shortly, the Greenland Redpoll is a large form of Redpoll, almost as large as a Linnet (*L. cannabina*), with unspotted rump, and, in the male, little or no rose colour, except on the crown of the head.

There are two examples of *L. cannabina* (Linn.), the Common Linnet, in the museum at Reykjavik. One is labelled 'Auðnutitlingur' by mistake, and one bears its proper name. There is no reason to suppose that this bird has ever occurred in Iceland in the wild state.

Plectrophenax nivalis (Linn.).

Snow-bunting.

Native names: 'Snjótitlingur,' 'Sólskríkja' (the first, meaning the bird which twitters in the snow; the second, that which screams in the sunshine). Professor Newton adds 'titlings blike' for the male; but I have never heard it, and Gröndal omits it.

Resident, and common: some individuals seem to leave the country in winter, so Gröndal calls it a bird of passage. It is not unlikely that they all do, and their places are taken for the winter by others from Greenland and Spitzbergen.

They frequent chiefly stony or rocky places, but in winter are found round farms and houses, like sparrows in England. Their nests are placed in a crevice of rock, under a boulder, in a stone-heap, or stone wall. They are large, loose, and untidy, like a Yellow-Ammer's, and are made of moss, roots, and grass, with a lining of finer grass, and some ptarmigan's feathers or sheep's wool. The eggs are five in number, sometimes six, and are white, slightly tinted with grey-purple, spotted and blotched with umber-brown and black; the latter colour has a tinge of purple in it. I have an exceptional clutch which are white, thickly spotted with light red-brown. Young birds have sometimes left the nest by the end of June, but fresh eggs may be found till the end of that month. The male Snow-bunting, a very handsome bird in breeding dress, has a very pretty note—a liquid and long-repeated warble, sometimes uttered when the bird is perched on a boulder, sometimes on the wing. In the latter case, the cock circles round in wide curves, a yard or more from the ground, occasionally pausing and hovering like a Skylark, and at a distance looks like nothing so much as a large black-and-white butterfly. At that time of year he is snow-white except the mantle, shoulder, tail, and last two-thirds of the primary quills,

which are black. The female is brown spotted with darker brown and black, except the secondaries, which are white. In autumn dress all ages and sexes put on, by moult, a good deal of rust-colour on the upper parts, and it is in this dress that they visit England.

Calcarius lapponicus (Linn.).
Lapp Bunting.

Native name: 'Sportitlingur' (according to Professor Newton, but I have never heard this name; ?Spörtitlingur). Gröndal merely gives 'Snjótitlingur' and 'Sólskríkja,' the names of the Snow-bunting, which indicate the company in which it is found.

A rare wanderer. Faber (*Prodromus*, p. 15) records an occurrence in the south without giving date or locality. There is a specimen in the British Museum from Iceland, an adult male, from the Gould Collection; and Gröndal mentions a third (*Verzeichniss*, p. 358) without locality, as having been shot in the winter of 1877. It may very easily be commoner than the above records would indicate, as it no doubt associates with Snow-buntings, and is probably usually mistaken for a bird of that species.

Sturnus vulgaris, Linn. Starling.

Native name: 'Stari,' or 'Starri'; the former is as old as the Younger Edda.

An occasional straggler of rare occurrence. There are several earlier reports, but a specimen was shot in December 1878 in the south, and the skin preserved (Gröndal); it is, no doubt, the one now in the Museum at Reykjavik, which Herra Gröndal informed me had been shot near that town. I am informed, on the authority of Sjera Árni Jónsson of Skútustaðir (Suður þíngeyrar Sýsla) that one was shot at Grímstaðir on the 3rd December 1899.

Corvus monedula, Linn. Jackdaw.

Gröndal (*Skýrsla,* p. 35) mentions that this bird has been shot at Eyrarbakka by Herra P. Nielsen. As it habitually associates with the Rook (*C. frugilegus*) it is not unlikely to extend its wanderings with that bird to Iceland at times. I have, on the Yorkshire coast in autumn, watched Rooks coming in from across the sea in a stream which continued all day, and amongst them were a good many Jackdaws. On account of its small size (13 inches, wing 9¼ inches) and its grey neck, traces of which are to be found even in young birds, it is not likely to be confused with any other Corvine bird visiting Iceland.

Corvus corax, Linn. Raven.

Native name: 'Hrafn' (also 'Krummi,' which Gröndal considers to be an attempt at vocalising the bird's note, as is also 'Hrafn'). There are, besides, dozens

of ancient and more or less poetical and mythological names for this bird, if any one cares to go and dig them up. I prefer to leave them decently buried where they are.

A resident, formerly common, now rapidly decreasing in numbers. The nests are harried and the adults poisoned in many parts, because they interfere with the duck preserves. Two fledglings we took from the nest in 1884 had been fed by their parents on crow-berries (of the year before, preserved under the snow) and birds' eggs (of Whimbrel and Golden Plover). The crow-berry is also called in Icelandic 'Krákaber,' which means the same as our name. I appended a query in the *Zoölogist*, April 1886, asking the enlightened public whether there was known to be any special connection between this plant and the Corvidæ, beyond the crow-coloured berry, but got no response.

We saw a plucky pair of Whimbrel attack a Raven near their nest, and ill-armed as they were, defeat him with loss (of his own feathers, as well as of the eggs he was lusting for; of dignity also, in a marked manner).

The Raven bids fair to be a scarce bird in Iceland before long. It breeds in March or April, or early in May, in cliffs, usually in a very inaccessible place, but sometimes in one ridiculously easy to reach. The eggs—five, or sometimes only four, in number—are placed in a loose untidy nest of sticks and general rubbish; the eggs are greenish-white in ground colour, spotted, scribbled, and blotched with grey and black.

The pied variety of the Raven, which seems formerly to have been not so very uncommon in Iceland, but commoner still in the Faeroes, was named by Vieillot *Corvus leucophæus*, under the impression that it was a distinct species, instead of an instance of that albinism to which all black-coloured birds seem specially liable. I have never met with one, but Mr. J. G. Millais informs me that he saw one near Myvatn in 1889.

Corvus corone, Linn. Carrion Crow.

Native name: 'Faereyja-hrafn' (so Herra Gröndal says —*Skýrsla*, p. 35—but I should have imagined this name more applicable to *C. frugilegus*, q.v.).

Gröndal states that one was shot in Iceland on January 16, 1881, but does not give the locality. The present species is quite a southern bird in range, very rare even in south Scandinavia. The young birds are not always easy to tell from young Rooks, as the latter have the usual Corvine nasal bristles until maturity, which might lead to confusion between the two species.

At all events, the visits of the Carrion Crow to Iceland are likely to be extremely infrequent; yet it may be well to mention that *C. corone* can be distinguished from *C. frugilegus* at all ages by its more massive and raven-like bill, and by the purple (not blue) sheen on the body, passing into green on the head; and from *C. cornix* by the absence of any shade of grey from the plumage.

Corvus cornix, Linn. Hooded Crow.

Native name: 'Kráka.'

An occasional visitor from the Faeroes, where it is very common.

Easily recognised from the rest of the Corvidæ visiting Iceland by its ash-grey mantle and breast, contrasting with the purple-shot black of the rest of the plumage. Even quite young birds are not likely to be mistaken for those of any other species.

Corvus frugilegus, Linn. Rook.

Native name: 'Kráka.'

For some occult reason, young Rooks seem to visit the Faeroes pretty regularly, and I have seen a considerable number of skins from those islands, very few of which have been those of adults with bare chin and nostrils. They seem not uncommonly to extend their wanderings to the south of Iceland, and even occasionally to the north also. I have seen several skins at Akureyri, and was told that they had been obtained in the neighbourhood. My indifference, in one case, as to the acquisition of such a rare bird seemed, I remember, rather a puzzle to the owner, who considered himself justified in asking ten kroner for it.

The young Rook is, as is well known, very much like the young Carrion Crow (*C. corone*), and has no bare skin round the base of the bill, but the usual

Corvine fringe of bristly feathers, pointing towards the end of the bill, and covering the nostrils. Its bill is, however, slenderer and less raven-like, and the gloss on the feathers is blue, and not purple. Adult Rooks, with bare skin on the throat and forehead, very seldom occur in Iceland indeed, but the same differences hold good in their case also.

It is somewhat singular to find a bird migrating northwards in autumn in this hemisphere—northwards in spring, southwards in autumn, being the almost invariable rule.

Asio otus (Linn.). Long-eared Owl.

Native name: 'Triá-ugla,' according to Gröndal.

A very rare occasional visitor. I have a record of the shooting of an example of this species in the Eyjafjörðr in 1897. I believe it was supplied to me as the history of a stuffed specimen now in the Museum at Reykjavik. The only other occurrence that has come under my notice is one noted in Professor Newton's letter to the editor (*Ibis*, 1864, pp. 131-33), where it is stated that the late William Proctor had an example sent to him (from the north of Iceland ?). As the northernmost range of this species in Europe is about 63 N., it affords another instance of a species wandering northwards on the autumn migration, contrary to the general practice, which leads them southwards at that time of year.

Asio accipitrinus (Pall.).
Short-eared Owl.

Native name: 'Ugla.'

Occasional visitor of rare occurrence. Its claim to a place in the Icelandic list rested for many years on the uncertain basis of a plate in 'Olafsson's *Reise*. Herra Gröndal, however, records three modern instances of its occurrence in *Skýrsla* (p. 34), all in the south, and Herra P. Nielsen (*Ornis*, 1887, p. 157) one, obtained at Hraungerði in Árnes-Sýsla, October 5, 1877, and one at Eyrarbakka, September 30, 1879. He expresses an opinion that Faber's *Strix aluco* (*Prodromus*, p. 4) may be referred to the present species, in which view I quite concur. I may add that a specimen, which I take to be of this bird, was procured for me in the early spring of 1894, some time before my visit to Iceland in that year, in the Melrakka Slétta ('Fox Plains') in the north-east; but they were so unsuccessful in making a skin of it that they thought it not worth sending—to my infinite regret, as it would have been sufficient to identify the bird as a visitor to the northern parts of the island.

Nyctea scandiaca (Linn.). Snowy Owl.

Native names: 'Snjó-ugla,' 'Snæugla,' 'Náttugla,' 'Káttugla.'

An occasional winter visitor, chiefly to the northern parts. Like several other Arctic species, its visits

usually coincide with severe winters and springs, when there is a good deal of Greenland ice on the coasts. Dr. Kjerulf informed Mr. W. E. Clarke that an adult Snowy Owl had been shot at Hallormstaðir (Suður Múla Sýsla) in the cold summer of 1882, and others seen—'no doubt a family party from a nest somewhere in the neighbourhood,' Mr. Clarke adds. In support of this suggestion, I may mention that Mr. J. G. Millais has described to me in a letter that he watched one of these birds hunting a river (the Sóg, not far from the foot of Þingvellir Lake) for fish, 'exactly like an Osprey,' and saw it seize a char, 'which it carried off out of sight, doubtless to its young.' This would be some time in June or July 1889, and from these two statements it appears that the Snowy Owl remains occasionally to breed in Iceland, in spite of the absence of its favourite prey, the lemming.

It seems to occur in the Melrakka Slétta (north-east) as frequently as anywhere; and I have the skin of a female from thence, shot in the winter of 1897, and one of my companions in 1900 picked up a fine skin at Oddeyri, which I believe came from the same place.

It is enough to describe it as a huge white owl, the male nearly 2 feet, the female 26 to 28 inches, or even more, in length. In younger individuals the white plumage is more or less spotted and barred with black, especially on the head, back, and shoulders; this is by degrees lost with increasing age, and the very old birds have no black except on the claws, bill, and pupil of the eye.

A Snowy Owl generally sits on a hummock, or stone, in an open place, for choice, and looks at some distance like a milestone. When they have young the parents are often very bold and aggressive, but at other times (*expertus loquor*) a Snowy Owl is usually as bad to get at as any shy stag.

Haliaëtus albicilla (Linn.). Sea Eagle.

Native names: 'Örn,' 'assa,' 'ari' (found in the Younger Edda).

A resident, not common, breeding in sea cliffs, and also in crags near an inland lake, or by a river where fish are obtainable. It feeds inland on trout and char, of which the heads, deeply scarred with claw-marks, may occasionally be found by river and lake sides. By the sea it takes sea-fish, but it does not disdain a dead sheep. Mr. J. G. Millais tells me that he has seen a Sea Eagle in Iceland take a very large trout, but never saw it molest ducks. I have, however, disturbed it when feeding on a freshly-killed Scaup, by a river which held a good many trout.

The nest, placed on a cliff-ledge, is made of sticks, lined with twigs, roots, or grass; by the sea a good deal of seaweed is used. The eggs are two in number, roundish in shape and dull in texture, measuring $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches by $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches, and are of a dirty white, more or less spotted with red-brown; but Iceland examples are but little spotted, in my experience, and one I got has no spots at all.

The bird is not likely to be mistaken for any other, but I may as well say that its colour is brown (wing quills nearly black); the tarsus (lower part of the leg) is bare of feathers in its bottom half. In old birds the head turns a dirty white in colour and the tail quite white. Length: males 28 to 30, females 33 to 36 inches.

I once watched for some time two of these birds, an old one and its progeny, in the northern Reykjadalr. Careful instruction was being given, and the youngster taught how to fly in large even circles above the water; also the old bird seemed to indicate what would be the next lesson by ending up with several stoops on what I took to be an imaginary fish below. I supposed them to be mock stoops, because the bird checked itself by spreading its wings long before it reached the water, and once, if I was not mistaken, it stooped when it was not above the water at all. They finally went off together.

Falco candicans, Gmel.

Greenland Falcon.

Native name: 'Fálki' (?'Hvitifálki,' but this is more descriptive, perhaps, than appellative).

An occasional visitor, of which I have seen several examples stuffed; but they were only regarded as fine specimens of the indigenous falcon, for the two species are not discriminated in Iceland. There is one in Consul Havsteen's drawing-room at Oddeyri, and one,

as far as I recollect, in the sanctum of the clergyman at Hrafnagil, near Akureyri. This species probably visits Iceland under much the same conditions as the Snowy Owl, but not so frequently. It is somewhat difficult to ascertain, however, as this and the next species are usually confused together. I think there is a Greenland Falcon in the Museum at Reykjavik also, but I did not make a note of it, and am not sure.

The differences in plumage between this species and the indigenous bird will be found under the Iceland Falcon. The 'white falcons' imported from Iceland since very early days (twelfth century, at least), and so highly valued by falconers, were doubtless migrant Greenlanders.

Falco islandus, Gmel. Iceland Falcon.

Native names: 'Fálki,' 'Veiði fálki' ('Hunting falcon') 'Haukur,' 'Valur' (= '(bird of) Battle'). 'Haukr' and 'valr' are Eddaic names.

A resident, decreasing in numbers. This is due apparently to two causes: the regular market that exists for the eggs and young birds, and also the disturbance of the duck-breeding preserves and the consequent trapping of the old birds. The latter mischief cannot be denied, and it is not an unusual thing to find headless ducks lying about which the falcons have struck down *en passant* and have not taken any further notice of. This rather suggests the

purposeless and unfeeling way of too many English gunners with sea-birds.

Falcons breed early, often in the end of April or beginning of May, and place their nests, which are made of sticks and twigs, on a ledge of a cliff, laying usually four eggs, but sometimes three only. These have a ground colour of pinkish white, or light red, and are spotted thickly and blotched irregularly with different shades of rusty red; they are roundish in shape, and from $2\frac{1}{4}$ to nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. After the young have left the nest, the ground underneath will be found to be strewed with bones, mostly those of the Rock Ptarmigan, which seem to be their favourite food. There is an Icelandic fable that the Falcon screams in agony, when eating a Ptarmigan, as soon as he reaches the heart, finding then for the first time that he has killed his long-lost sister. However this may be, a passing Falcon once enabled us to deal satisfactorily with a covey of Ptarmigan which we had previously found unapproachable, which was not fraternal. The Falcon happened to pass almost over them, and we found them perfectly amenable after that. Falcons are strong birds, and need as a rule large shot to stop them, but I once, rather to my surprise, killed one quite dead with No. 10 shot (we were looking for snipe, and he appeared unexpectedly, and the shot was by no means a near one).

The Iceland Falcon is a remarkably handsome bird; its plumage may briefly be described as ash-grey above (white on the back of the neck) with darker grey and

white bars—underneath white, with dark grey stripes on the throat, spots on the breast, bars on the flanks and thighs. Length: males 20 to 22 inches, wing 14 to 14½ inches; females 23 to 26 inches, wing 14½ to 16¼ inches. In young birds the upper parts are brownish grey and almost uniform in tint, with the merest indications of the dark and light barring. The dark grey spots and bars of the underparts of the adult are represented by longitudinal streaks of sooty brown, annually decreasing in area till they become the dark grey spots and bars of maturity. The prevailing colour of the upper parts of the Iceland Falcon, then, is grey in maturity, brown-grey in adolescence; the corresponding colour of the Greenland species being *white*, more or less streaked and spotted above with brown-grey. The Icelander, after the first moult, has the thighs and flanks barred; the Greenlander never carries a bar on the underparts, but instead pyriform spots, comparatively small in mature birds, the stalk of the pear pointing to the beak.

This bird has borne from very early times a high reputation amongst falconers. Falcons from Iceland were especially valued. They are mentioned from this point of view in the Sagas (*e.g.* in Saga Hákonar Gamla, which can be found in the *Biskupa Sögur*, a collection published in Copenhagen in 1858 and onwards). We learn that Ástriðr, the daughter of 'Olafr Tryggvason, owned a Falcon from Iceland; King Hákon the Elder sent several as choice presents to the Sultan at Tunis; and so forth. Iceland Falcons

have always been considered difficult birds to train, though faster than Peregrines: and nowadays the latter have displaced the Gyrfalcons in the affections of the few who still follow, under difficulties, this ancient but excessively fascinating sport. In old days, however, the Gyrfalcons were the favourites amongst falconers; and the kings of Denmark and Norway, owing to the indifference of the Icelanders, used to send their own royal falconers to Iceland to take the young falcons, and the remains of the huts which they used for this purpose are even now to be seen on certain low hills with a good look-out: one near Reykjavik (*teste* Gröndal) still bears the name of Valhús ('Falcon-house').

It certainly seems more appropriate to select this noble and historical bird as the national sign, or crest, of Iceland, than the other candidate for this honour—the ignoble, if commercially valuable, codfish!

Falco æsalon, Tunstall. MERLIN.

Native name: 'Smirill' ('Smyrill' in the Edda). The form 'Smirl' given by Professor Newton I have not met with, nor has Gröndal, apparently. Professor Newton also gives 'Dvergfálki,' which is only an adoption of the Danish 'Dvergfalk,' not naturalised.

Summer visitant, arriving in April and remaining till September. Nowhere very common in my experience. The nest is sometimes placed on the

ground, and is usually partly sheltered by a bush of willow, and consists of a handful of *Vaccinium* twigs in a slight hollow. I have seen, however, several inaccessible nests in crags, and am inclined to think that they are becoming cliff-breeders by a process of natural elimination. The ground nests are so systematically robbed that no Merlins but those that have found out the manifest advantages of breeding in a precipice get a chance to propagate their species. The eggs are usually four in number, sometimes five. Farther south, as in England, six is not an uncommon number, but many species seem to reduce the number of eggs the farther north they range. The eggs are roundish, about 1½ inches long, reddish white, spotted and blotched with bright rust red, often so thickly that the spots are almost confluent.

The female is brown above, with five pale bars across the tail; underparts buffy white, streaked, except on the throat, with dull dark brown. Length 12 inches, wing 8½ inches. Young males resemble the female, but turn bluer above on adolescence. Very fine old males, clear blue-grey above, brown-striped rufous below, but still keeping the white throat, are occasionally to be met with. Length of male about 10 inches, wing 7½ inches.

The general food seems to be the Meadow Pipit, but the Merlin is quite capable of tackling a larger bird, and I have seen them paying undesired attentions to the Redwings; once I saw a very fine flight indeed at a snipe.

Phalacrocorax carbo (Linn.). CORMORANT.

Native names: 'Skarfur,' 'Dílaskarfur' (*i.e.* 'Spotted Skarfur'), 'Útilegu-skarfur' ('Outlaw Skart'), 'Hnuplungur' (Snatcher).

Resident and abundant, breeding in colonies, chiefly round the northern coasts.

It nests on ledges of cliffs, or on rocky islets, and makes a large, untidy—and subsequently filthy—nest of seaweed and rubbish, in which it lays three or four eggs of pale blue, usually so much encrusted with a softish white chalky substance (which soon gets very dirty) that the real colour of the eggs does not appear. For their size see the Gannet's. The smell of a colony of Cormorants' nests is a thing not easily forgotten.

The bird is glossy black with a whitish patch on the throat, and also (in summer dress only) on either thigh. It has somewhat of a crest, worn on the back of the head, not on the forehead as in the Shag. Length 36 inches, wing 14½ inches. The young bird is sooty brown above, whitey brown beneath.

The Cormorant feeds on fish, often straying some distance up rivers, and doing there great damage to the younger trout and salmon. In such localities they should be warned off—with a gun: at sea they seem to do next to no harm, as they feed largely on fish of no value to man.

This species has fourteen tail-feathers.

Phalacrocorax graculus (Linn.). Shag.

Native name: 'Topp-skarfur' (Skart with a topknot). Gröndal adds the name 'Hnaukr' or 'Hnókr,' meaning 'pinnacle,' which he thinks has been given to this bird from its upright carriage when perched; but it might equally easily apply to its habitual perching places.

Resident and common, breeding in similar places to the last species, but chiefly on the southern and western coasts. Like the last, also, it is a gregarious breeder, but not to the same extent. Its nest is like the Cormorant's, and smells quite as nasty, and the eggs are only distinguishable, in the absence of the birds, by their rather smaller size, and (usually) smaller comparative diameter.

The bird is smaller than the Cormorant, and has no white patches on throat or flanks. Its colour is black with a strong bottle-green sheen, and it has a crest on the forehead, reflexed at its end, which is worn in the spring only. Length 27 to 28 inches, wing $10\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Young birds are of a sooty brown, but begin to show at a very early age some indications of the green sheen which has gained for this bird in England its common name of Green Cormorant.

There are only twelve tail-feathers in this species, the Cormorant having fourteen.

It may be borne in mind that Gmelin named this bird *Pelecanus cristatus*. Several continental

writers have misinterpreted this, and recorded *Pelecanus onocrotalus*—the true Pelican—as a straggler to Iceland. Gmelin, Cuvier, etc., only meant to refer to the Shag.

Sula bassana (Linn.). Gannet.

Native name: 'Súla,' occasionally 'Hafsúla.'

Resident and common round the coasts, breeding gregariously in a number of isolated colonies. One is on the Westmann Islands, one on Grimsey, one (I am told) off the north-west peninsula. There is obviously one also on the Fuglasker, off Cape Reykjanes, for I have watched from a steamer the Gannets laboriously carrying small loads of seaweed to, I think, Eldey. There must also be one in the Skagafjörðr, from the number of birds to be seen there. Not unlikely it is on Drangey, the last stronghold of Grettir Asmundarsson, the Icelandic Robin Hood. Also, from the same reasons, I expect there is another colony on, or near, Cape Reykjanes, the north-east point of Iceland—and, no doubt, others elsewhere.

The nests are of seaweed and grass, and the Gannet lays one egg only, much like that of a Cormorant or Shag, and with the light-bluish shell overlaid with the same kind of chalky deposit, which has the same tendency to get dirty when paddled upon.

The eggs of the three species have, generally, the following measurements :—

	Length.	Breadth.
Cormorant, .	$2\frac{3}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Shag, . . .	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{8}$ to $1\frac{1}{4}$
Gannet, . .	$3\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$ English inches.

The Gannet, as most people know, is of a creamy white with black wing-primaries: it is about 34 inches in length, wing 19 inches. The young are sooty with white spots, and grow gradually lighter in colour till their sixth year, when they are adult.

The food of the Gannet consists of surface-swimming fish (herring, for choice) which it spies when circling at a considerable height in the air, and, closing its wings, hurls itself headlong upon, dashing up the water on contact and going some distance below the surface. I believe, having once watched for some time a number of these birds feeding about a hundred yards from where I was anchored in a small boat, that they seldom miss their aim. By calling attention to the exact locality of a shoal of herrings, they often render an unintentional service to fishing smacks on the look-out, quite compensating man (who considers he has a sort of proprietary right in everything everywhere), for the toll or tithe they themselves take of the shoal of herrings.

Ardea cinerea, Linn. Heron.

Native name: 'Hegri.'

On this bird Herra Gröndal remarks (*Isl. Vogeln.* p. 594), that its name is universally known, though the

bird is so rare. I suspect that this must often happen with a nation of great readers, if their early literature is mixed up with that of other countries as that of Iceland is with that of Norway and Denmark. I have been exceptionally fortunate, therefore, in having met with this bird on three different occasions, and in three different years, but always on sea-fjords, and always singly. Gröndal considers it most likely to be met with on the west and south-east, with which he is probably most conversant. My actual experience ranges from north-west to north-east. It is only an occasional visitor, and has never been known to remain for the winter, and its slow-flapping flight and blunt-ended wings, with its grey plumage and black 'points,' will serve to distinguish it from any other bird. The Hegranes, in the Skagafjörðr, has apparently gained its name from the occurrence of this bird there.

Plegadis falcinellus (Linn.). Glossy Ibis.

It is stated by Reinhardt (*Vidensk. Selsk. Afh.*, vii. 96), that five examples were shot in the south of Iceland and sent to Copenhagen in the spring of 1824. In the remote chance of this bird's appearing in Iceland again, it may possibly be worth while to mention that its figure and size are those of a Curlew and that at a distance it looks black; on a nearer examination, the head, neck, and lower surface will be found to be of a dull deep red, the wings and back nearly black, with a metallic gloss of green and purple. Length about 22 inches, wing $10\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Anser cinereus, Meyer. Grey Lag-Goose.

Native name: 'Grágaes' (old form 'grágás').

The Geese of Iceland are a dreadful puzzle. I really think the more any one investigates them, the less he knows about the matter.

At all events, the present species is *the* Wild Goose of Iceland, and seems largely to outnumber all the others put together. It is a summer visitor, breeding in out-of-the-way parts of the interior, in view of the fact that at moulting-time geese are practically flightless and need, therefore, seclusion from all possible foes. It does not seem justifiable to suppose, as writers on the birds of Iceland have done, that one species of goose breeds in the north and another in the south. They all alike breed in the desert interior, as far as they can get from man, with enough vegetation for the young, when born, to feed on. If the river on which they nest runs south, they make their way southwards when the young can travel and moulting dangers are nearly past; if north, then *vice versâ*. Many of the rivers rise in the south (*e.g.* those from the Vatna Jökull) and flow north, so that a bird which makes its appearance on the Skjalfandafljót (for example) may have bred in the very south of Iceland, where that river rises.

The nest is placed on the ground, amongst willow bushes, if there are any, or any kind of vegetation, and is not uncommonly on an island in a lake or river. This is not entirely to avoid man (the great

danger nowadays), but all Icelandic birds that breed on the ground choose an island if they can find one and this habit seems to be a survival from the ancient days, when Arctic foxes were abundant, as they are not now. The nest is made of a few sticks and twigs and dead grass, or other vegetable matter, and when the four or five eggs are laid, the female packs them in a lining of her own grey down. The eggs are large, 3½ inches by nearly 2½ inches, and are creamy white in colour.

As they are early breeders, and nest in places where the vegetation is nearly always scanty and backward, the old birds sometimes have to travel some distance, during the first part of their stay, to more suitable feeding-grounds. We came across such a feeding-place, evidently frequented by a considerable number of geese, early in June 1900.

The upper parts of the Grey Lag-Goose, including head and neck, are of a dull grey brown, becoming almost white on the abdomen. There are sometimes a few small black blotches on the latter, and, in very old birds, a few white feathers round the base of the bill. (Care must be taken that these two features do not cause confusion with the White-fronted Goose.) The rump and 'shoulder' of the wing are of a blue-grey, and these are two of the strongest distinctive marks of this species. The feet and bill are of a light flesh-pink, and the latter is terminated by a white 'nail' on the upper mandible. Length of gander 33 to 36 inches, wing 17 inches. Females are about 30 inches, wing 16 inches.

† Anser albifrons (Scop.).
White-fronted Goose.

Native name: 'Helsingi.' Gröndal applies this name to *Bernicla leucopsis*, and calls the present species Grágaes. It is possible that he does so correctly, and I am quite prepared to accept his emendation; but nine out of ten Icelanders mean the White-fronted when they speak of the Helsingi.

Faber was the first to notice this species, in 1820, and found it breeding on the Þverá and Þjorsá rivers in the south. I am not aware that any one has since had a similar experience, and Faber's statement has been questioned by Krüper (*Naum.*, 1857, second article, 'Anser albifrons . . . brütet wahrscheinlich keine auf Island'), and he calls it a wanderer only on its way to and from Spitzbergen and Greenland. It is precisely because it does breed in these two countries that it may be expected to do so to a less extent in Iceland, and those Arctic species (as the Bean Goose), which have no reason for passing by Iceland, may be put down as unlikely to breed there. I have myself obtained a specimen of *A. albifrons* on the Skjalfandafljót, shot on July 30, 1885, as it was making its way with others down to the coast. I have not the least doubt that this bird had bred in the interior, as it had hardly recovered from the moult. In any country where recently moulted geese are met with, it would be safe to infer that they had bred there. If anybody

chooses to devote a summer to considerable personal discomfort, and some expense, by making an early visit to Iceland and following goose-haunted rivers (such as the one mentioned above) to their upper waters, it is likely enough that he might be able to solve in part the problem of the breeding of geese in Iceland. It might only result in a 'wild-goose chase' of a less productive kind, however, for the difficulties would be considerable. I would willingly give any help in my power to any one who contemplated making the attempt. As far as I can ascertain, owing to increased persecution at the hands of those who want their eggs to eat or to sell, all the wild geese in Iceland have withdrawn themselves still farther into the interior of late years.

The nests of wild geese are much alike; but the eggs of the present species, which we may put down as a very rare breeder in Iceland, are decidedly small, measuring about 3 inches by 2, and are creamy white in tint.

The bird is of a brown-grey colour above (not blue-grey on the rump, like the Grey Lag); the breast is of a dirty grey and is marked, in the gander especially, with coarse irregular black bars. There is a conspicuous margin of white feathers round the base of the bill, which is orange-coloured with a white terminal 'nail.' Feet and legs orange also. In young birds (which are duskier) the white ring round the bill and the black blotches on the breast are almost, or quite, absent. Length of male 26 to 27 inches (female rather less), wing 16 inches.

+ [**Anser segetum** (Gmel.). Bean Goose.

The only record of this species is to be found in the statement of the late William Proctor (see *Ibis*, 1864, p. 132) that he had received the bird from Iceland. The Bean Goose is an Arctic-breeding species (unlike the Grey Lag) and does not extend its range to Greenland or Spitzbergen, but rather to north-east Europe. I do not mean to assert the impossibility of its occurrence there, seeing that the Grey Plover (*Squatarola helvetica*), which has pretty much the same breeding range, has more than once occurred as a rare straggler; but I look upon the statement with some doubt, and certainly refuse to admit its claim to be considered a breeding species in Iceland.]

+ **Anser brachyrhynchus**, Baillon.
Pink-footed Goose.

Native name: 'Grágaes.'

Professor Newton (Baring Gould, App. p. 414) surmised that this species might be found to breed in Iceland. It does so in Spitzbergen, and may therefore be reasonably supposed to do so in Iceland, which would not be much out of its route. The same gentleman subsequently states that he saw a specimen in the Durham Museum, with eggs which had been sent with it from Iceland to the late William Proctor (*Ibis*, 1864, p. 132). I have additional reason for supposing it to breed in Iceland, where, however, it must be

extremely rare. Evidence from Iceland on critical points in ornithology is usually so much muddled up by native collectors that it has to be received with great caution; we want a few goose-skins shot off eggs by a trustworthy collector. I saw three undoubted specimens of the short-billed Pink-foot which had been shot by the farmer at Þingey, on the lower reaches of the Skjalfandafljót, in August 1894. They were making their way to the sea at the time, and were still in a partially flightless condition, and when I saw them they were in the possession of some young men who had bought them and were unwilling to part with them—to my great regret.

The eggs of the Pink-footed Goose are nearly $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches long by a little less than $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and are quite white.

The bird is specially noticeable by its short bill, which is but little over $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, and a good deal shorter than the head. It is of a greyish brown all over, except under the tail, which is white, and the belly lighter than the rest. The shoulder is greyish, but more of a lead-grey than the corresponding part of the Grey Lag. The short bill is pinkish with black edges and 'nail,' and the feet and legs are pink. Length 27 to $28\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the gander rather the larger; wing 16 to 17 inches.

† **Bernicla leucopsis** (Bechst.).
BARNACLE GOOSE.

Native name: 'Helsíngi,' according to Gröndal.

This species breeds in Greenland and Spitzbergen, and passes on migration, but only irregularly, through Iceland. Eggert Ólafsson (*Reise*, 1772) gives a figure of an Iceland specimen, which appears to be the first record; and Faber states that it is most plentiful in the south-west, though not rare in the north, and gives the date of its appearance (end of May, reappearing in the beginning of September). Of late years it does not seem to have been so much noticed, and Gröndal has apparently seldom seen it. Four examples were brought to him in November 1885, and several were seen, only, on the 23rd June 1887 (a singular date), near Reykjavik. We may put it down as an irregular migrant along the coasts in spring and autumn.

† **Bernicla brenta** (Pall.). BRENT GOOSE.

Native name: 'Hrota,' 'Hrotgaes' (?'Hróta,' and 'Hrótgaes'=the goose seen, or shot, in stormy weather) also 'Margaes' (Sea goose).

This bird also appears to pass on migration in spring and autumn along the coasts of Iceland on its way to and from its more northerly breeding-grounds (Greenland, Spitzbergen, etc.). Faber was informed that it nested in the Eyjafjörðr in June 1819, but he was

probably misled here, though there is no impossibility in the thing; but the Brent and Barnacle Geese seem only to be met with on the coast, and I have never heard of either inland. Faber gives the date October 1820, and Nielsen of Eyrarbakka has shot them in October 1878, September 28, 1880, and May 8, 1881, which are all probable enough. I have never met with the bird myself (nor been in Iceland early, or late, enough in the year to be likely to do so), but I have seen a stuffed specimen in the Museum at Reykjavik, and my friend Herra St. Stephensson tells me that a small goose visits the Eyjafjörðr pretty regularly in autumn, and only stays a few days; about there they put it down as the Margaes. So that we may conclude that it visits Iceland as a migrant in spring and autumn, on its way to and from its more Arctic breeding-grounds, and with considerably more regularity than the Bernacle Goose.

Cygnus musicus, Bechst. WHOOPER SWAN.

Native names: ''Alpt,' ''Alft,' 'Svanur' (the first name is Eddaic; Gröndal connects the first two with the Latin 'albus').

A resident in considerable numbers, breeding on the remoter fells on almost every tarn or lake of any size but I only know of one lake, and that a very large one (Arnarvatn), where more than one pair breeds. They are very noisy and quarrelsome birds, and if a strange pair or individual on the feed should stray to the tarn

which they consider to be their own for the time, the resident pair at once advance to the attack, the male leading, the female in reserve close behind: and the intruders are only ejected after a great deal of trumpeting and chasing and swaggering, which is most amusing to watch. The nest is sometimes placed on an islet, sometimes on a spit of land, sometimes in a secluded marshy spot close to a mountain loch: it consists of a conical heap of moss and vegetable rubbish, with a few willow sticks and twigs of Bláber (*Vaccinium uliginosum*). The nests are evidently used year after year, with a little repairing and furbishing up, consisting chiefly of a fresh lining of moss and grass. Therefore they get very solid in time, being sometimes four feet in diameter at the base and nearly a yard high. In the cavity at the top are placed the eggs, from three to six in number, elliptical in shape, of a creamy white, soon dirtied by muddy feet; they vary a good deal in size, *e.g.* in a set of five from the same nest (I took them myself) the length varies from $3\frac{3}{4}$ to $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Eggs are laid from the middle of May to the middle of June, according to the earliness of the season and the amount of snow and ice on the fells. We saw cygnets on June 22. I have repeatedly seen swans come within easy shot of me on horseback, and they certainly are a grand feature of the landscape, and add a singular attraction to the wild and desolate regions where they live.

They do not invariably live in desolate regions, however. There is a singular phenomenon connected with

this bird, which is just hinted at by Baring Gould (p. 155). In lower Vatnsdalur, in Húnavatns Sýsla, is a wide shallow lake, through which the river runs. On this, early every spring, an immense flock of Whooper Swans assembles on their return inland from the sea-coasts. Some, no doubt, pair and go off to the fells, but a great number pass the whole summer on this lake, forming a picturesque addition to the already picturesque neighbourhood. The neighbouring farmers, however, on whose land they graze, do not altogether approve of them. We estimated their numbers at near one hundred.

In the *Field* of November 2, 1895, appeared a most singular statement professing to describe the capture of wild swans in north-east Iceland, which I feel compelled to regard as a 'later Saga.' The writer, who signs himself 'Jón Stephanoson, Ph.D.,' tells us that the farmers of a certain neighbourhood lie in wait on pony-back for the swans on their line of flight to the sea after moulting-time is over, having previously provided themselves with 'dogs, rattles, and various instruments of noise.' On the appearance of the swans, the farmers raise such a pandemonium of sound that the young swans in the flock 'descend helpless like falling stones.' They drop 'to earth as if they were shot,' the old ones taking no notice; this plan is 'used successfully every year,' while 'those who use it prefer it to shooting.' Moreover, it 'for centuries has been in use in the north-east of Iceland.'

The editor pertinently remarks that no writer on

Iceland during the centuries appears to have heard of it. Professor Newton mentions that 'Olafsson (1772) and Olavius (1780) speak of swan-hunts while the birds are moulting only. No doubt a flock of swans might be surprised on the ground by a sudden dash of yelling riders and dogs, and so much confused that a young bird or two might be knocked over. But it looks as if some one had been 'filling up' (to use an expressive Americanism) Jón Stephanoson, Ph.D.

Bewick's Swan (*C. bewicki*, Yarrell) has never been ascertained to visit Iceland—various guide-book statements to the contrary notwithstanding. See Brit. Mus. Cat.: Birds, vol. xxvii. p. 31. It is not in the least likely to occur; the breeding range is Siberian, from Kolguiev eastward.

† **Tadorna cornuta** (S. G. Gmel.).

Sheld-Duck.

Native name: 'Brandgás' (the Danish 'Brandgaas').

Gröndal (*Skýrsla*, p. 49) mentions that one was shot in Hafnarfjörðr on 27th January 1894, which is now in the museum. No other specimen is known to have been obtained in Iceland, but there have been several appearances in the Faeroes, and it breeds not uncommonly along the coasts of Norway.

† Tadorna casarca (Linn.).

Ruddy Sheld-Duck.

Native name: none.

An inhabitant of South Asia, North Africa, and South-east Europe, which strays unaccountably in many directions. Several have been shot in the North of Scotland, several in Sweden, and elsewhere in the north-west. In August 1892, a flock appeared in the south-west of Iceland, and three were shot at Eyrarbakka by Herra P. Nielsen, and two more in the Eyjafjörðr (north) a little later.

†Anas boscas, Linn. Common Wild Duck.

Native names: 'Stokkönd' (Gröndal explains 'stokkr' to mean a rivulet or drain; but surely it is the Scandinavian 'stok-and'='tree-stump duck'?); 'Groenhofði' (♂ only,='greenhead'), 'Grá-önd' (♀, partim), 'Húsönd' (partim): to which Gröndal adds 'Blákollsönd' (blue-headed duck) and 'Kílönd' (also=drain-duck).

Resident, though, no doubt, partially migratory, and pretty abundant, as its wealth of names would indicate. Breeds in marshes amongst long grass and sedge, occasionally on dry hill-sides (even birch woods) at a considerable distance from water. The eggs are, as is well known, greenish drab, and about 2¼ inches long.

No description of so familiar a bird is necessary. Hybrids between this and other ducks are not very unusual, but I have heard of occurrences of the kind in Iceland.

Anas strepera, Linn. Gadwall.

Native name: 'Grá-önd,' vaguely. Gröndal specifies it as 'Litla grá-önd,' but that name is not particularly applicable, and I have always heard it given to the female Teal.

Very scarce, and so far only met with on Myvatn in Southern Þingeyrar Sýsla, as far as I have heard. Faber was the first to discover it there in June 1819, but he obtained no specimens. W. Proctor got the eggs in 1837, and later he had two skins of the bird sent to him (Newton, *Ibis*, 1864, p. 132). In 1862 Messrs. Shepherd and Upcher not only got the eggs, but shot the bird from them, and a few days later the drake. In 1885 Carter and I got the eggs, and I saw the bird quite near enough to the nest to feel pretty certain about it. Later we compared the eggs and down with Mr. Seebohm's, and none of us had a shade of doubt left on the subject. I have had no definite records since.

The nest is made of grass, and is sometimes at a distance from water; like all ducks' nests it gets a lining of down plucked from the parent's breast, as soon as incubation begins. The eggs, six to twelve in number, are of a greenish buff, and a shade over

two inches long: sometimes the green tinge disappears by fading, but often a trace remains. The Gadwall feeds on vegetable food, and is therefore never coarse in flavour; but the ornithologist in Iceland is never likely to get many chances of forming his own opinion on this point.

The Gadwall can be always recognised by its marbled grey appearance, and the chestnut patch on the wing formed by the median coverts, succeeded by a white speculum. The chestnut patch is visible a long way off. The length of the male is 20 to 21 inches, wing 10½ to 11 inches. The female is a little smaller, and duskier in tints. The young are very hard to distinguish from those of the Common Wild Duck (*A. boscas*), but have a rather slenderer bill, with a more decurved upper outline, and a yellowish tinge on the throat and cheeks.

I stated my opinion (*Ibis*, 1886, p. 49) that a nestful of eggs with down which we found in 1885 would prove to be those of the Shoveller. As the name of this bird has, in consequence, got into print in connection with Iceland, I will take this opportunity to say that that opinion proved to be unfounded. We never saw the bird, and it was only the look of this nestful of eggs that led us to connect the Shoveller with Iceland at all.

+ **Dafila acuta** (Linn.). Pintail.

Native names: 'Grasönd' (Grass-duck), 'Grafönd' (an apparent corruption of the former, which I have not heard), 'Langvíu-gráönd.'

A summer visitor, not very uncommon, especially in the north. I have found it fairly common near Myvatn, and have taken eggs there and in other places. The nest is placed within easy reach of water, but usually in a dryish spot amongst willow bushes and decumbent shrubs, and is generally well lined with dead leaves, and subsequently, about the time that incubation is contemplated, with down. The eggs are rather small for the size of the bird, are six to nine in number, and of a greenish buff colour, measuring under 2⅛ inches in length. The food of the bird is chiefly vegetable, varied with fresh-water mollusca, and such insects and larvæ as may come in its way in the fresh-water lakes, tarns, and rivers where it prefers to feed; it is therefore an excellent bird for the table.

The drake is a handsome fellow, with a brown head and neck showing a bronze gloss, white throat and underparts, back and sides white finely vermiculated with black, wing brown with a glossy green white-edged speculum, and two central tail-feathers which are narrow and black, projecting three inches or a little more beyond the rest of the tail. Length, including the tail, 26 to 28 inches; wing 10½ inches. The female is rather like that of the Wild Duck

(*Anas boscas*), but is longer in the neck, smaller in the bill, and slenderer generally, and has the same glossy green speculum as the male. The tail-feathers, too, are somewhat pointed and have oblique buff bars underneath, which no other duck in Europe has.

Querquedula crecca (Linn.). Teal.

Native names: 'Krikönd,' 'Urt' (connected apparently with a word meaning 'root'), and 'Urtönd' (partim), 'Ört,' 'Litla grá-önd' (? ♀).

A summer visitor principally, but some few remain through the winter. Pretty common, and generally distributed throughout the country in suitable localities. The nest is placed under a dwarf-willow bush, or amongst vegetation of some sort, not far from water: and six to ten eggs are laid in it, of a dark cream colour, occasionally verging on greenish, but this tint is not permanent. Their length is about 1¾ inches. The bird is easily recognised from its small size (only 14½ inches long, wing 7¼ inches), and only the following species could be mistaken for it. The drake has a ruddy-brown head, with a broad stripe of black, glossed with green, beginning just in front of the eye and proceeding to the nape, bordered with buff. The body is light grey pencilled with black (the flank-feathers being very valuable to the fisherman as the well-known 'teal wing'); on the breast these pencillings turn to spots. The grey-brown wing has a

black speculum glossed with green and bordered with buff. The female is a diminutive of the Common Wild Duck, and has a less resplendent speculum than the drake. From the middle of July till the end of September the drake (as is the case with the drakes of all, or almost all, species of duck) puts on a sort of close imitation of the female's plumage called sometimes the 'eclipse dress.'

The food consists of fresh-water plants and other vegetable matter, with mollusca and other aquatic fry; and the flesh of the Teal is justly held in great estimation for the table.

+ **Querquedula circia** (Linn.). GARGANEY.

Native name: 'Taumönd.' As far as I know, the only recorded occurrence of this species is the example which Preyer states to have been shot on Myvatn on June 16, 1860, so that it is pretty fortunate in having a local name at all.

The drake can be recognised by its brown-mottled head and neck, with a long white stripe over the eye backwards; elongated scapulars, which are white with black edges; blue-grey shoulder; green speculum with white border, and white underparts. Length 16 inches, wing $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The female is rather smaller and duller. The eggs resemble those of the Teal, but are a shade larger (just under two inches long), and have no green in them, being of a pure cream

colour. Any record of the nest in Iceland will require to be authenticated by the skin of the parent, shot off them.

Preyer states that the specimen shot on Myvatn had ten to twelve ducklings with it (*Reise*, p. 408), and adds that the nest was taken on the Eyjafjörðr on July 10, 1860, by a certain Arni 'Yngjaldsson, but as he describes the eggs as 'grünlich schmuzig weisser' in colour, this rather points to a nest of the Teal, not of the Garganey.

+ **Mareca penelope** (Linn.). Wigeon.

Native names: 'Rauðhöfði grá-önd' (Redheaded grey duck), 'Urtönd' (partim), 'Rauðdúfu-önd' ('Red dove duck,' a rather stupid name, which I have not heard).

A summer visitor, becoming commoner towards the north. It is considered somewhat rare in the south, but we saw a good many on Þingvallavatn early in June 1900, and took a nest there. There is a good deal of confusion amongst Icelanders respecting the females of the various ducks, and they nearly all get the name of 'grá-önd' (grey duck) in consequence. No doubt the female ducks are difficult to distinguish in the case of any one who never has had the chance to see good figures, or named specimens, and does not use a field-glass. The wonder rather to my mind is that the average Icelander, considering his oppor-

tunities, knows so much about his country's birds; the average Englishman knows a good deal less.

The drake, as two of its vernacular names seem to imply, has a red head and neck, with a light buff crown; breast white; mantle grey pencilled with black; 'shoulder' white; speculum glossy green with black border. Length 18 inches, wing 10½ inches. The female is flecked with light brown all over, more buff below; has the green speculum and also the white shoulder.

The nest is placed amongst sedges or thick grass or under a willow bush near water, and in it are laid six to ten eggs of a light glossy cream colour, in length 2¼ inches. I once found a Wigeon's nest with two or three Pintail's eggs in it, and the two birds seemed to be in perfect harmony; but I suspect that 'ructions' would ensue when the ducklings appeared. The Wigeon feeds on bog grasses and vegetable matter, and is always good for the table.

[**Fuligula ferina** (Linn.). POCHARD.

Native name: ?'Rauðhöfða-önd' (partim).

Mohr (*Forsög*, 1781) reports having seen a Pochard in the Eyjafjörðr; and on June 20, 1860 (a fruitful year in novelties), a Herr Gehin is related by Preyer to have shot another on the lake at Þingvellir, in the south, which he (Preyer) subsequently saw (*Reise*, p. 430). No one has seen this species in Iceland since.

The drake Pochard may be recognised—if any one ever meets with him in Iceland again—by his chestnut head and neck; black breast; shoulders and back white, finely vermiculated with black; dull grey alar speculum; bill black, with a broad blue-grey band across the middle. Length nearly 20 inches, wing $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The female is dingy brown with some approach to the finely-lined white mantle, and a white chin.

Pochards live a good deal on fresh water, and are then, though diving-ducks, excellent for the table; in the winter on the sea they grow fishy in flavour, like the rest of the diving kind, and are about as acceptable on the dinner-table as a Scaup.]

[**Fuligula nyroca** (Güldenstädt).
White-eyed Duck.

Native name: none.

Mohr (*Forsög*) states that he met with this bird on one of the northern rivers in 1780, or 1781. Faber (*Prodromus*, pp. 72-73) relates that he saw a flock of White-eyed Ducks on the Eyjafjörðr on May 20, 1820, and subsequently found a nest which he believed to be of this species. Lastly on March 10, 1821, he saw another flock at Eyrarbakka in Árnes-Sýsla. Gröndal merely relates these items without comment, and Professor Newton seems somewhat sceptical also. The bird has never even bred in Britain, and is very rare north of the Baltic. Though Faber is most careful

and accurate in general, I feel bound to submit that modern confirmation of the occurrence of *F. nyroca* in Iceland is necessary.]

Fuligula marila (Linn.). Scaup Duck.

Native names: 'Dúk-ond' (*i.e.* the duck which 'ducks'), and by corruption, 'Duggond.'

Summer visitor, abundant, especially towards the north. The plentifulness of this species at Myvatn may be inferred when I mention that Mr. Thomas Carter and I counted on one small group of islands in that lake 305 nests of the Scaup with eggs on July 13, 1885, and at that point stopped counting from sheer weariness—and 120, two days before, in the same district. Later on, every tarn and lake in the north swarms with Scaups, old and young, and a nuisance they are—quite as bad as pheasants in the turnip-fields in September—being almost uneatable. They are distinctly less nasty, however (especially young birds) at this time, before they get to the sea, than when shot on the latter, which is our usual experience of them in England. But I would rather dine off a guillemot, any day. Mandt's Black Guillemot (*Uria mandti*) I have found very palatable. If I appear to consider the Iceland bird fauna from a gastronomic point of view, I should like to explain that I do so because in that country I trust as far as possible to my rod and gun to keep the table supplied, and, though by no means fastidious, have no preference for what

is distinctly nasty: and as other ornithologists may like to lead the same independent kind of life there, a few hints may not be thrown away. When I skin a bird the best parts of the remains, unless nasty, go into the next stew. Not Scaup, though, unless there is a serious dearth.

The Scaup drake is a handsome bird, with head, neck and upper breast of a shining jet black; mantle white, finely lined transversely with dark grey; a white speculum, with a black posterior margin glossed with green, on the dusky wing; rest of underparts white; bill, legs, and feet bluish, the bill with a black 'nail' at the tip. Length 18 inches, wing 8½ inches. The female is dusky brown, has a white ring of feathers round the base of the bill, dirty-white underparts, and a dingy imitation on the mantle of the colours of the corresponding part in the male. The Scaup is a clumsy 'cob-built' duck, quite different in figure from the elegant Pintail and Wigeon.

The nest is placed amongst low vegetation, or amongst stones even, near water, and the eggs (six to ten in number) are rather more than 2½ inches long, and of a dull drab in colour.

The food at sea consists of mollusca (especially mussels; see 'mussel-scalp,' the latter being probably connected with the names 'scallop' and 'scaup'), and some sea-plants (*e.g. Zostera*). In Iceland the food consists of fresh-water mollusca (*Limnæa peregra, Pisidium, Succinea*) and a certain amount of vegetable matter. The rivers and lakes of Iceland (such as are

not contaminated by glaciers) swarm with small mollusca, and it is these which give the trout and char their red flesh and fine condition.

† Clangula glaucion (Linn.).

Common Goldeneye.

Native name. 'Húsönd ('House-duck,' from its habit of nesting in holes in the turf walls of farm buildings).

It was on June 23, 1885, when Mr. Thomas Carter and I were riding amongst a number of small sheets of water in the delta of the Heraðsvötn (Skagafjörðr) that my eye fell on a pair of goldeneyes in a pool. I was wanting to take an interest in goldeneyes, having then never seen Barrow's Goldeneye at large. They allowed me to pass on horseback at about forty yards distance. My instant thought was that they were not Barrow's Goldeneye at all, the drake having a circular, and not crescent-shaped, white patch on the face. I duly made a note of it that night and recorded it (*Zoölogist*, 1886, p. 1), and also requested my friend Stephensson to look out for the bird and procure me specimens, if possible. In the following winter he sent me two drakes—one quite a young bird, with a sooty head, the other adult—of *C. glaucion*. I never saw it at Myvatn, and the duck-farmers there failed to recognise a sketch of it, nor did any of the authorities in Iceland appear to meet with it afterwards. Gröndal merely mentions in *Skýrsla* (p. 50) my record,

and when I was at Reykjavik in 1900 told me that he had not met with the bird. I pointed out that there was an adult male stuffed in the museum nevertheless.

It is probably, therefore, a rare species in Iceland, and may be a summer visitor only, though staying till late. It will, doubtless, be found to occur in almost all parts of the country sporadically. Oölogists must not, therefore, take for granted any longer that golden-eyes' eggs from Iceland are certain to be those of *C. islandica*.

The two species are very much alike, and I refer the reader to the more detailed description of Barrow's Goldeneye, merely mentioning here the differences between them. *C. glaucion* is a size smaller; the drake's head is glossed with green, not purple; and it has a nearly circular, not half-moon-shaped, white patch on the cheek. The females resemble one another very closely, but there is the same difference in size; the crown of *C. glaucion* ♀ is flatter, and less arched, than of *C. islandica*, and the latter has the greater wing-coverts tipped with black, though whether this difference always holds good I am unable to say. For exact measurements, see under *C. islandica*. Probably one of the best criteria would be the respective weights; I regret that I have omitted to collect information on this point. I shall, however, be much indebted to any readers who will be kind enough to note down the exact weights of adults of both species, and furnish me with them. I should prefer the details

concerning the present species to come from elsewhere than Iceland, as two so nearly allied species might possibly hybridise.

† Clangula islandica

(Gmelin, *Syst. Nat.* i. 2, p. 541, *n.* 116 (1788)).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE.

Native name: 'Húsönd' (partim).

A resident, common in the north, and not uncommon anywhere, though it does not go to the high fells in the interior to breed. It nests in the turf walls of farm outbuildings, and thence gets its Icelandic name of 'House-duck'—also in holes in bank sides, and under stones. The down in the nest is of a dirty-white colour; by this and the large green-blue eggs, the nests of the two Goldeneyes may at a glance be distinguished from any other Icelandic duck—but not from one another! The nest consists of a little grass and vegetable odds and ends. The eggs are light-green blue, as already mentioned, and 2½ inches long (taken by myself from a nest on which I captured and carefully examined the female, and am certain of the species). Eggs in my collection of the Common Goldeneye from Norway are of exactly the same colour and size.

The drake of Barrow's Goldeneye has the head and neck black with a purplish gloss (not green), a crescentic (not round) white spot on the cheek; lower neck, scapulars, alar speculum and underparts white;

back and rest of wing black. In 'eclipse plumage' it may be distinguished from the female by its retaining traces of the white cheek-patch. The female has a reddish-brown head, followed by a white collar and a grey-brown neck and shoulders; white alar speculum, divided into three by black bars; back grey-brown, rest of underparts white.

The food consists of mollusca, small crustacea, and a certain proportion of vegetable matter.

Barrow's Goldeneye does not gain its English (or rather American) name from the John Barrow who visited Iceland in a yacht in 1834, and subsequently wrote a fairly readable book of travels—but from Barrow of North-west Passage fame (the Barrow of 'Barrow's Straits' and 'Point Barrow'). Barrow's Goldeneye is a pretty common bird in Northern and Arctic America, but is only found in Iceland in the Old World, though it has been known to stray to other parts of Europe.

MEASUREMENTS.

	Length.	Wing.	Tail.	Culmen.	Tarsus.
Clangula islandica, ♂	20 in.	9½	4½	1½ (nearly)	1½ (full)
C. glaucion, ♂	18 ,,	9 (nearly)	4	1¼ (full)	1½ (bare)
C. islandica, ♀	18 ,,	8¼ to 8⅜		1¼ (bare)	
C. glaucion, ♀	17 ,,	7⅜		1¼ (full)	

The culmen is the length of the bill, measured along its upper surface from where the feathers of the forehead end, to the tip.

The tarsus, or, more correctly, tarso-metatarsus, is the long joint above the foot; the apparent 'knee'

at its top (which bends the wrong way for a knee) corresponds anatomically to the human ankle. The tarsus is formed by a fusing together of what are in man the second, third, and fourth metatarsal bones.

Harelda glacialis (Linn.).
Long-tailed Duck.

Native names: 'Hávella' (pron. 'Howedtla'), 'Fovella' (variant 'fóella'). The meaning of these names is obscure, and they are probably onomatopoetic—attempts to describe the bird's note.

A resident and common everywhere, breeding on mountain lakes and tarns and by lowland rivers, frequenting the sea all round the coasts in winter. Readers are warned against shooting it for dinner, unless they can get nothing else.

The nest is placed amongst dwarf bushes or sedge on an islet, or amongst the vegetation clothing the shores of a fresh-water lake, tarn, or river. It is made of a little grass with dead willow leaves, and is subsequently lined thickly with a very soft down, almost equal to that of the Eider. The eggs, six to nine in number, are small for the size of the bird, but vary considerably, even in the same clutch, and measure from a shade under 2 inches in length to nearly $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Their colour varies also from greenish drab to pure drab.

The drake is easy to distinguish from any other bird, although no other duck varies so much in plumage. The summer and winter dresses are quite different, and

there are all manner of intermediate stages, dependent on age and season. But the long central tail-feathers which are from 7 to 9 inches long, and which gain for this bird, on the Northumberland coast, the name of 'Sea Pheasant,' are a distinguishing mark which is seen at a glance. In winter the drake has a white head, with forehead and cheeks pale grey, and a brown streak on each side of the neck: the back and shoulders and most of the wing are nearly black, the rest of the bird white except the brown secondaries. In summer the side of the head becomes white, the rest of the head and neck turning brown like the back, while the feathers of the back and scapulars show conspicuous chestnut edges. I do not know which of the plumages is handsomest. The female is of a dusky-grey brown all over, with a whitish streak behind the eye, and dusky-white underparts, and no lengthening of the central tail-feathers. The drake is 22 to 25 inches long, including the tail (tail 3½ inches without the long feathers), wing 9 inches. The female about 16 inches altogether.

The food when on the sea (that is, during the greater part of the year) consists of marine mollusca, often obtained at a very considerable depth, with crustacea. On fresh water the mollusca, so abundant in most lakes in Iceland, as well as in the rivers which do not originate in glaciers, form their principal food, mixed with aquatic larvæ, etc., and generally some vegetable matter.

The clear bugle-call of the drake, which is uttered

all night through in the Iceland summer, redeems many a wild mountain tarn in that country from what would otherwise be a desolate and oppressive silence.

Cosmonetta histrionica (Linn.).
Harlequin Duck.

Native names: 'Straumönd' (Stream-duck), 'Brimdúfa' ('Wave-dove'!), 'Brimönd.'

Resident, moving southwards in some measure in winter, occurring not uncommonly on all but the still rivers, and those which, flowing from glaciers, are without insect life. They breed under bushes or thick sedge, or in holes in river banks, and seldom more than twenty yards (rarely as much) from the water's edge. The nest is hard to find, being more skilfully concealed than that of any duck with which I am acquainted. There is not much nest, usually, and the eggs, which vary from a pale to a warm cream colour, are from five to eight in number, and a shade under $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length.

The plumage of the drake is rather hard to describe briefly. The head is black, the upper parts a dark lead grey, the underparts grey-brown, the flanks chestnut; and the head, neck, and upper breast are conspicuously barred, obliquely and transversely, with white stripes, bordered with black and sometimes with chestnut as well. Length 17 inches, wing 8 inches. The female is dusky brown, with dirty-white underparts and a patch of the same colour in front and

below the eye, and another behind it on the ear-coverts. She closely resembles the female Longtail, and most supposed occurrences in Britain of the Harlequin have turned out, on examination, to have been those of the Longtail. The bird gets its English name from the bizarre but very handsome plumage of the drake. It is an excellent bird for the table, surpassing in this respect any duck with which I am acquainted, and I regret to say that it is shot a good deal in the close season by Icelanders. Like Barrow's Goldeneye it is more a bird of the New than of the Old World, and is found in the latter only in Iceland and north-eastern Asia.

Mr. Howard Saunders (*Manual of British Birds*, p. 446) states, on the authority of Mr. L. Belding, that the food of the Harlequin consists in summer of 'insects,' which is delightfully vague, more especially as a glance at the *Zoologist* (1886, p. 153) would have gained information a trifle more precise. As the bird is so unlike other ducks in its habits and habitat, it will be worth while to specify that it haunts not only rapid rivers, but the rapidest parts of them, and when feeding is to be seen on the shingle beds, turning over the pebbles on the water's edge, in just such places as an angler would hunt for May-fly and stone-fly 'creepers.' And for the same reason, the swallowed food at this season is found to consist almost exclusively of larvæ of *Ephemeræ* and *Phryganidæ*, especially the former. When disturbed, Harlequins seldom take wing, except at very close quarters, but paddle down-stream through

the roughest and most broken water, diving repeatedly, and taking a waterfall (even a considerable one) without hesitation. They are easy enough to kill on the wing, but on the water need a stiff dose of No. 4 shot, else they dive, die under water, and are probably lost.

I should add that the Harlequin is a very late breeder—three weeks, or so, later than the generality of ducks in Iceland—and no one need expect to find eggs much before July. The only one I recollect before that, I found lying in a shallow pool by a river-side at the bottom of the water—it having evidently been produced unexpectedly (in a very early spring) before there was a nest ready for it.

Somateria mollissima (Linn.). Eider Duck.

Native names: 'Æður,' 'Æðar-fugl,' also 'æðar-bliki' (♂), 'æðarkolla' (♀).

Resident in large numbers; especially abundant round the coast, strictly preserved by law, and in consequence very tame. In Akureyri, for instance, the old ducks with their ducklings feed along the edge of the fjord quite close to the houses and road, and take no more notice of the passers-by than domestic ducks would do—which is very pretty. In winter they pack in immense flocks. The eider down is, of course, the property of the owner of the land, and every inducement and protection is given to the birds, as the down is a valuable article of trade. It is universally used in Iceland for 'duvets'—no other word seems to apply,

for they are not thin and quilted, like those we use in England, but thick and almost spherical. It requires some practice to use them effectively, or even gracefully. My companions have occasionally, when I was getting up for a stroll before breakfast, suggested the idea of Atlas of old days, or of a person trying to balance a huge football on his chest, and there were invariably uncovered limbs projecting here and there. I have always preferred my own rug.

The Eider is a big and clumsy-built duck; the male black and white, with a pale green nape; the female a uniform dusky brown with darker bars. But the species may be instantly recognised (from all but the King Eider) by its large size, and the peculiar strip of short feathers which runs down the bill from the forehead almost to the nostrils. Length 25 inches, wing 12 inches.

The nest is made of twigs, leaves, or grass, etc., inland, and is placed amongst vegetation; near the sea it is largely made of seaweed, and is often placed amongst rocks and stones. The eggs are large (three inches long), five or six in number, and vary in colour from a dull dingy green to a rather bright green.

The birds feed on shellfish and other marine products. What they live upon up country I have never been able to ascertain, as their persons are sacred—like a fox's at home. The birds breed on islets on, or near, the sea—occasionally on the mainland; but some few go a considerable distance up rivers and breed on suitable islands.

In a book entitled the *Annals of Winchester College*, by T. F. Kirby, the following passage occurs: 'In 1553 the Society began to keep swans, and continued to do so for many years, until in fact the turkey superseded the swan at table. . . . By 1556 the stock was increased to "thirteen white olde swannes, and four of the present yeare," and a few years later there were thirty-three, "some white some ydyr," *i.e.* cygnets.' And a footnote explains 'ydyr,' which has an unmistakably Celtic appearance, to mean 'eider, or downy.' From this it might be inferred that the Eider Duck gains its name from a Welsh word meaning 'downy.' I believe it is the other way on; and, as Professor Skeat indicates, 'eider' is Old Norse (*i.e.* Icelandic) and not Celtic at all. I may add that the Eider Duck is called 'Æðr' in the Younger, or Prose, Edda, which was finally completed not later than A.D. 1250, though much was written considerably before that date.

In the British Museum Catalogue, vol. xxvii., p. 489, there is an '*Anas borealis* (Gm.)' mentioned as a 'doubtful species' which has 'not yet been identified.' Gmelin appears to have fixed upon a bird called by Pennant (*Arctic Zool.*, ii. p. 572) the 'Gulaund Duck,' and given it this Latin name in *Syst. Nat.* Count Salvadori conjectures that the bird indicated is the Eider. This is clearly wrong; the Gulönd is a common everyday name in Iceland for the Goosander, *q.v.* p. 75.

Somateria spectabilis (Linn.).
King Duck, or King Eider.

Native name: 'Æðar-kóngur,' 'Blikakongur.'

An occasional visitor from more northerly climes. Faber (*Prodromus*, pp. 67-68) states, amongst other instances of its occurrence, that the King Eider bred on Viðey, a small island near Reykjavik where Common Eiders are numerous, in 1819 and 1820. There is no absolute impossibility that this may have been the case, but it is at least unlikely. Male King Eiders, in not quite adult dress, are not uncommonly to be found during the summer in the company of male Common Eiders some distance south of their breeding grounds; as I have myself seen in Novaia Zemlya, where the Common Eiders were breeding, and the King Eiders were not. This is the explanation of the appearance of King Eiders in Iceland in summer, I feel sure; they are individuals, not quite fully adult, who do not feel impelled to go farther north to breed, but stay where they have found comfortable quarters. The Icelanders maintain, however, that the presence of the King Eider drake in the breeding season is a most fortunate circumstance for them, as his majesty largely increases the fertility of the Common Eider ducks. I have myself heard this gravely asserted; and as long as this myth survives, ornithologists will do well to spare, at the same time, any King Duck they come across, and also the feelings of the duck-farmers of those parts.

The King Eider drake can be recognised a long way off by his 'crown,' a fleshy tubercle at the base of the upper mandible, which is, like the bill, orange coloured. This species is rather smaller than the Common Eider, but otherwise much like it; it is 24 inches long, and has a wing of 11½ inches. The females, however, are very difficult to distinguish from females of *S. mollissima*, but they are rather smaller (length 22½ inches, wing 10½ inches) and more of a rusty red-brown in colour, than of an umber brown like the other species.

Œdemia nigra (Linn.). Common Scoter.

Native name: 'Hrafnsönd' (='Raven-duck,' and pronounced 'Hrabsund'). Sometimes erroneously called 'Dúkönd,' a name which belongs to the Scaup.

A summer visitor, not uncommon in the north, breeding in some numbers on Myvatn and other northern lakes, but seldom seen in the extreme south. I have seen it on lakes on the Arnarvatnsheiði, but very rarely, and that would seem to be its southern breeding-limit. Easily recognised by its colour, which is in the male a uniform black, in the female a dark sooty brown, a little paler underneath. The drake has a patch of orange yellow on the top of the bill, which is otherwise black; his length is 20 inches, wing 9½ inches.

The nest is placed amongst willow bushes and other

vegetation on an island in a fresh-water lake, less commonly on the mainland, and is made of loose vegetable matter, with a lining of dusky down added later; the eggs (five to eight in number) are of a creamy white and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.

The Common Scoter feeds on mollusca chiefly, and is quite unfit to eat.

The Velvet Scoter (*Œ. fusca*) so common on hill-tarns in Norway, has never yet been recognised in Iceland, but should be looked out for as not unlikely to occur—round the coasts, at all events. It has a white patch on the wing, and the brown-grey female a white spot behind the eye.

[1]Mergus merganser (Linn.). Goosander.

Native names: 'Stóra toppönd,' 'gulönd'; the latter seems to mean 'yellow duck,' which does not seem specially applicable; the first name means 'larger top-knotted duck.'

Resident and pretty common, and is, with the following, the only species of duck which is not protected by law in the close season. They are very destructive to fry on salmon and trout rivers, and can easily dispose of a six-inch trout. The two offending species are characterised by their long slender bills, hooked at the tips and serrated along the inner margins, whence their English name of 'saw-bills.'

The nest of this species is placed in a hole in a bank, or under a stone; the cream-coloured eggs are

six to ten in number and nearly $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, and are surrounded, during incubation, with a dirty-grey down.

The drake Goosander is a very handsome bird, with his snow-white breast, black crested head and upper neck, and black-and-white wings. Length 26 inches, wing $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The female has the head and neck rusty red, the upper parts grey, with a white speculum on the wing, underparts white. Length $23\frac{1}{2}$ inches, wing $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

I am afraid that this bird deserves shooting when found on a salmon or trout water, or its tributaries; afterwards they form a suitable object by means of which any one can acquire a reputation for generosity inexpensively. At all events, I should prefer not to dine off a Goosander myself; and I should hesitate to give one to any person I had a regard for.

Mergus serrator, Linn. MERGANSER.

Native name: 'Litla toppönd.'

Resident and common—too common; as it, like the Goosander, is terribly destructive to fresh-water fish.

The nest of the Merganser is usually well concealed amongst vegetation, in a hole in the ground, or amongst lava blocks, and the eggs, six to nine in number, are packed during incubation in a dirty-white down. Their colour is drab, often, but not always, with a greenish tinge when fresh.

The description of the Goosander drake will serve for a general description of this bird; but the Merganser

has a dusky-spotted bar across the chest, and near the shoulder a patch of very conspicuous white feathers with black borders. It is much smaller, however, being only 22 inches long, with a wing of 10 inches. The female is also a small copy of the female Goosander, but is more rusty red, and less grey, on the upper parts. Length 21 inches, wing 9½ inches.

The food consists of fish, and fish only—young trout and salmon for choice; and though its numbers ought to be kept in check for that reason (and it is, like the Goosander, exempted from legal protection), it is absolutely worthless for table purposes.

Lagopus rupestris (Gmelin).
Rock Ptarmigan.

Native names: 'Rjúpa,' 'Rjúp-karri' (♂), old form 'Rjúpkeri.'

Resident, frequenting hillsides at all altitudes like our Red Grouse, but, unlike it, found usually in birch woods and in the wildest and raggedest lava-tracts. To these latter they are very partial, retiring to them after feeding, and the old cocks sit on boulders and lava pinnacles (to keep a look-out, perhaps), as Black-cocks do on stone walls at home. Hence, I suppose, the name *rupestris*. In severe weather, hunger drives them down to the coast.

The nest is loosely made, of a few twigs and stalks of grass with odd feathers of the bird's own, and is often partially concealed under a willow bush, or

branch of trailing birch, but is sometimes quite in the open between two tussocks. The ravens get a good many of the eggs of the Rock Ptarmigan (or used to, when they were more abundant; but their numbers have been much reduced by sheep-farmers). The eggs are exactly like those of the Red, or Willow Grouse, that is to say, are spotted thickly with dark rich brown upon a cream ground colour, and vary in number from seven to twelve. The hen sits very close indeed, and obviously trusts a good deal to her colour to escape observation. I almost trod on a sitting hen one day, and she sat as if she had been cut out of wood.

The changes of plumage in this species are very interesting, and the male's dress is very unlike the female's. These variations have induced a variety of writers upon Iceland to publish some very erroneous theories—as that there are two, or even three, species of Grouse or Ptarmigan in Iceland; for in their perplexity they have imagined the existence of the European Ptarmigan (*L. mutus*) and the Willow Grouse (*L. albus*) in Iceland, supplementing the list with sundry hybrid intermediate forms besides. There is only one gallinaceous bird found in Iceland, and that is the Rock Ptarmigan (it is a true Ptarmigan and grunts or croaks, instead of 'becking,' as the Red and Willow Grouse do), and any differences in appearance are caused by seasonal and sexual changes of plumage. As the Rock Ptarmigan cannot be confused with any other bird existing in Iceland, I do not think it

necessary to give a detailed description. In summer and autumn its dark 'grousy' body and white wings will distinguish it on the wing from anything else. In winter, of course, it turns white. It is well figured in Dresser's *Birds of Europe*, and the curious autumn dress (which has caused confusion with *L. mutus*) is described and figured by Messrs. W. E. Clarke and Backhouse in the *Ibis* of October 1885.

As with grouse in Scotland, the Rock Ptarmigan in Iceland have a way of increasing in numbers during successive seasons, up to a certain point, and then suddenly becoming scarce. This has been explained by the occasional cold late springs which occur every now and then in Iceland; but I happened once to be there in a year when the Ptarmigan had become scarce suddenly (though the spring had not been a particularly late or cold one), and from various dead birds I examined, I came to the conclusion that the decimation of the species was due to an epidemic similar to our grouse disease. There was the same emaciation, featherless legs and toes, and inflammation of the viscera, with abundant entozoa.

Rallus aquaticus, Linn. Water Rail.

Native name: 'Keldu-svín' (Swamp-swine!). There are also some antique names mentioned by Gröndal, but not, as far as I know, now in use, viz. 'Loekjakráka,' 'Jarðsmuga,' etc.

Resident, not very uncommon in the south-east, but

decidedly scarce in the north. I have seen a good many specimens of the bird. In the south-east it breeds in some numbers, and Herra P. Nielsen of Eyrarbakka (to whom I am indebted for a good deal of information) found seventy nests in six years, the number of eggs in each varying from seven to eleven. It clearly lays two clutches of eggs in the season, as he has found eggs as early as 29th May and as late as 10th September; but whether the second laying is in consequence of loss of the first is a question, birds in Iceland being rarely double-brooded.

The eggs are light buff in colour, and sparsely spotted, the colour of the surface spots being deep ruddy brown, and of the deep spots grey brown. The nest is placed amongst coarse sedge or other vegetation in wet places, and is made of sedge leaves coiled round.

Gallinula chloropus (Linn.). WATERHEN.

Native name: 'Vatnshæna,' which is merely a translation of the Danish 'Vandhöne' = 'Waterhen,' and 'Poule d'eau.' Also called 'Sjóhœna.'

A very rare straggler, which is only known to have occurred twice in Iceland. The first was killed in the Vestmann Islands on April 4, 1882, and the skin was preserved for Herra Gröndal. The second came under my own observation. While staying for a few days at Hnausir in Húnavatns Sýsla, the farmer there brought in a Waterhen's skin, requesting us to let him know what it was. It had been caught in a half-starved

condition at the edge of one of the meres near the house late in the previous autumn (of 1899). The farmer tried to feed it, but without success, not knowing the proper food, and on its death wisely preserved the skin.

Fulica atra, Linn. Coot.

Native name: 'Blesönd' (*i.e.* the duck with a white 'blaze' on its forehead).

An occasional wanderer from Europe, chiefly to the south-west. Gröndal thinks that it has occurred more frequently of late years. It seems to be generally met with in late summer and autumn (the season of the southward, not the northward, migration, by the way!). The first record is Faber's (*Prodromus*, page 63) of a pair shot in the late autumn of 1819 near Reykjavik. The Coot is rare in the north, but I have seen several skins there at different times. It has never been known to breed in Iceland. It seems hardly necessary to give a description of so well known a bird; its sooty-grey plumage, large lobed feet, and white blaze on the forehead will prevent the possibility of mistake.

Ægialitis hiaticula (Linn.).
Ringed Plover.

Native name: 'Sand-lóa.

A summer visitor, widely distributed and not uncommon, arriving at the end of April and staying till

September. It breeds in bare gravelly places, mostly near the coasts, but sometimes in the very interior. We found a pair, obviously breeding, at the sandy end of Rjettarvatn, a tarn on the Arnarvatnsheiði, a wild interior plateau some two thousand feet above the sea.

Its nest is placed in a bare gravelly place, and lined with fine gravel; the four eggs are of a light sand colour spotted with black, length about 1¼ inches. They are difficult to see, being of exactly the same colour as their surroundings.

The bird is light brown above, white below, with a broad black bar across the chest; a narrower one passing from the base of the upper mandible below the eye, where it is joined by another which forms a broad black bar across the crown, and then passes through the eye to the nape. Length 9 inches, wing nearly 6 inches. The black bars in the female are narrower and browner. Young birds are much shaded with buff and grey, and are decidedly smaller in size.

[Ægialitis curonica (Gmel.).
Lesser Ringed-Plover.

Native name: none.

Herra Gröndal (*Verzeichniss*, p. 359) states that a flock of the Little Ringed-Plover were seen on the beach near Reykjavik on July 27, 1878, and adds that the bird has been killed in company with *Æ. hiaticula*. In England, where it is extremely rare, the Lesser

Ringed-Plover seems to occur singly. I do not know if any authentic Icelandic specimens are in existence, but there is a diminutive race of *Æ. hiaticula* which, on the score of size, has often passed muster as *Æ. curonica*; and the mention of the two in company above rather points to this, especially as the true *Æ. curonica* is more an inland and fresh-water bird than one of the sea-coasts. Still, of course, it has to reach the sea-coasts first, on migration. However, I think that a little further evidence is desirable. The Lesser Ringed-Plover is slender in build, only 6½ inches long, with a wing of 4½ inches, and has the shaft of the first primary only white, of the rest dusky. In *Æ. hiaticula* there are patches of white on the shafts of all the primaries.]

Charadrius pluvialis, Linn.

Golden Plover.

Native names: 'Lóa,' 'Ló,' 'Heiðlóa,' 'Heilóa,' 'Heilò.'

A summer visitor in great numbers, breeding on fells and hills 'from the centre all down to the sea'; flocking in August, and then beginning to work down towards the sea-coast, leaving the country during September or the first week of October. One of the commonest birds in Iceland, and met with everywhere —its plaintive whistle, musical as it is, becoming wearisome in time from the way in which the birds dog you and incessantly repeat it. I found a nestling only a few days old, near 'Asbyrgi, on August 8

1894; the Golden Plover had already commenced to flock previous to their departure for winter quarters, and I believe the little one had even then been deserted by its parents.

The nest is placed on a grassy or lichen-clad spot in an open situation; it is a mere cup-shaped hollow, with a few vegetable scraps (probably all grown on the spot), in the bottom. The four eggs are of a ground colour ranging from a warm, ruddy buff, through pale stone colour to almost olive, and are boldly spotted and blotched with purplish grey and deep brown-black. Length about 2 inches.

The bird it is surely unnecessary to describe in detail! I may remark that in summer it wears a black gorget, stretching from the bill to the thighs (of a pure black such as no breeding Golden Plover in Britain wears—so pick up a specimen in Iceland); this is moulted into dusky white in the autumn, and the bird is then in the dress most familiar to Englishmen. The head, back, and wings are at all seasons black, mottled with spots of golden and creamy white. *Axillaries white.* Length about 11 inches (young birds less), wing $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The food consists of insects, larvæ, mollusca; by the sea in winter of crustacea, worms, and mollusca.

Squatarola helvetica (Linn.).
Grey Plover.

Native name: none.

A rare straggler in late autumn. Two specimens are in the Museum at Reykjavik—one, I believe, shot by Herra P. Nielsen at Eyrarbakki on September 25, 1892, the other said to have been obtained near Reykjavik. One or two more have occurred, I believe, as casual strays. This bird bears a general resemblance to the last (this resemblance is greatest amongst the young birds of both species), but may be easily distinguished on the wing, even at some distance, by the *black* axillaries, which show very conspicuously in flight (those of the Golden Plover are *white*). The adult Grey Plover has no golden spots on head, back, or shoulders; but the young birds are almost as golden-spotted as those of the other species. In any state of plumage the present species may be distinguished, in the hand, by its longer bill, and by the fact that it has a hind toe, the Golden Plover having none. Length 12 inches (young birds rather less), wing 8 inches.

Vanellus vulgaris, Bechst. Lapwing.

Native name: 'Vepja' (the Danish 'Vibe,' and Norse 'Vipa'); also 'Isakráka' ('Ice-crow,' the point of which is not obvious).

A rare straggler, chiefly to the south-west, and mostly in the autumn. As with the Coot, Gröndal

thinks that its appearances of late years have increased in frequency. It has never been reported as breeding in Iceland.

It seems unnecessary to describe so familiar a bird to Englishmen, but it may be well just to state that its brown back with green gloss; conspicuous black occipital crest, and bar across the chest (extending over the throat and neck in summer dress); white underparts; rounded dark wings and flapping flight, ought to distinguish it sufficiently. Length about 12 inches, wing 9 inches.

Strepsilas interpres (Linn.). Turnstone.

Native name: 'Tildra.'

A spring and autumn migrant in some numbers, a small proportion of the visitors remaining to breed. But it is decidedly of uncommon occurrence as a breeding bird, and nests on the fells, as in Novaia Zemlya, and not on the coast near high-water mark, as is sometimes the case in Norway. Faber considered it to be a commoner bird in the south and west than in the north, and so it may be as a migrant; but as a breeding bird I believe the reverse to be the case, and my eggs are all from the north. I have no idea what Herra Gröndal meant by describing this (*Verzeichn.* 360) as 'probably a resident species'; and Howard Saunders adopts this, defining the bird in Iceland as 'sedentary.' If there is a migrating species it is the Turnstone, breeding in Greenland and wintering in

South Africa! Gröndal in his more recent writings (*Skýrsla*, p. 42) retracts this statement, and calls the bird a 'farfugl,' *i.e.* migrant.

Turnstones are very solitary birds in their breeding quarters (almost like the Dotterel, *Eudromias morinellus*, in this respect), and may be easily missed in the hundreds of thousands of acres of suitable ground, unless one chances to walk near the nest; then the parents are very vociferous indeed. In fact, all that is generally seen of breeding Turnstones is comprised in a sight of the old birds, in early autumn, leading their young ones down a river from the fells to the coast by easy stages.

The nest is a mere depression in the moss or lichen on a hill-top; it has a few bits of grass and scraps of moss or lichen for lining, in which are laid four pyriform eggs, greenish grey buff in ground colour, rather boldly spotted and blotched with blue-grey and black. Length about 1½ inches.

The old birds at that season are white below and on the back, and chestnut mottled with black above, while the white head and breast are streaked and variegated with a number of black bars and patches. For a fuller description I may refer the reader to Howard Saunders' *Manual*, or to my own in *British Birds, their Nests and Eggs*, where I have pretty fully described the changes of plumage in all this class of birds. The length of the adult is 9 inches, wing about 6 inches. The food inland consists of small beetles, flies, and anything in the insect way; on the shore, of small crustacea and other little living things.

Hæmatopus ostralegus, Linn.
Oyster-Catcher.

Native name : 'Tjaldur.'

Icelanders used to believe that this bird was the female of the Turnstone (the two have, of course, a sort of superficial resemblance in colouring), and the two vernacular names seem to be closely connected.

Not uncommon on the southern coasts, where it is to be found all the year through; but in the north in summer only, and rarely. I have never seen much of it inland in the breeding season (to nothing like the same extent as it may be met with in some parts of Perthshire, for instance), but odd pairs do occur, though not at any great distance from the coast. It should never be shot but by any one who wants a specimen for preservation, as it is perfectly harmless, as well as worthless for the table.

The nest is to be looked for on shingle-beds near the sea just above high-water mark, or on the rock ledges or the grassy summits of little islets—rarely on shingly or gravelly places at any distance from salt water. It consists of a mere hollow, sometimes lined with the native gravel only, sometimes with a little seaweed or grass. The eggs, which are probably three only in the generality of cases in Iceland, though as often four in England, are of a light clay buff in ground colour, spotted and streaked (sometimes boldly blotched) with light grey-brown and black; length $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

The bird is black above and white below, with a white patch on the wing and a large one covering most of the back. Legs and feet pink (no hind toe), bill orange. Length 16 inches, wing 9½ inches. Sexes alike. The young in first autumn are mottled a good deal with rusty and white.

The 'Sea Pie,' as it should rather be called (for even where they exist, it does not get an oyster 'once in a blue moon,' nor do oysters want very much 'catching') —the Sea Pie feeds on any small marine creatures, and its wedge-shaped bill enables it to deal with such as wear armour or cling to rocks; limpets, small crabs, mussels, annelids, sandhoppers, and other crustacea provide it with a varied bill of fare.

Phalaropus fulicarius (Linn.).

Grey Phalarope.

Native names: 'Þórshani' ('Thor's hen'). Professor Newton adds 'Flatnefjaður-sundhani' and 'Rauðbrystingur' (partim)—*i.e.* 'flat-billed Sundhani' (*q.v.*) and 'red-breasted one,' so they may be more descriptive than appellative; nor does Gröndal include them in his *Isländische Vogelnamen.*

A rare and local summer visitor, most abundant at passage times, on its way to Greenland and Spitzbergen no doubt, but some remain to breed. They still nest in small and decreasing numbers in the neighbourhood which Faber mentions, and I know of at least four other breeding places in widely distant parts of the

island, from one of which I have eggs and a skin of an adult bird in breeding plumage. Most of these breeding-places are either on the margin of a fresh-water lake, or on an islet in a fjord, and, with one exception, are all near enough to the sea to allow the birds to feed on the sea-shore, which they regularly do.

The nest of the Grey Phalarope is placed in or under a tuft of sedge or grass near the water's edge, and is usually well concealed; the material is grass, and the nest is unusually neatly finished for a Wader. The eggs are four in number, light greenish buff in colour, spotted and blotched with dark brown, and in length 30·5 to 30·33 mm., *i.e.* $1\frac{3}{16}$ to $1\frac{5}{16}$ inches.

The Grey Phalarope is blackish above, with a white patch on the side of the head and a white bar on the wing, the feathers of the shoulder and scapulars broadly bordered with buff, underparts from the chin dull chestnut. The winter plumage is entirely different, being chiefly light grey and black. Length about 8 inches, wing $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Males rather duller in colour and smaller. I may remark that none of the examples that I have seen from Iceland are in absolutely perfect breeding dress, like those from farther north (*e.g.* a skin I have from Point Barrow in Alaska, or one Mr. Trevor-Battye got in Spitzbergen and lent to me some time back). Their state of plumage may be likened to that of breeding Golden Plovers in England as compared to that of those shot from the nest in Iceland. All migrant species seem to put on the richest nuptial dress in the northernmost part of

their breeding range, and no doubt many evanescent sub-species have been founded on this fact.

The food of the Grey Phalarope consists of small crustacea and other marine creatures, and though the bird seems by choice to haunt fresh water as a general rule, it undoubtedly prefers to be within reach of the sea for feeding purposes, and likes to pick on ground covered with seaweed.

The Phalaropes can be recognised at a glance by their feet, which are webbed in lobes like a Coot's (whence '*Phalarope*' and '*fulicarius*'), not like a Duck's foot.

The eggs of the two species are so closely alike, and eggs are collected in Iceland in very many cases by persons so completely untrained in verifying them by careful observation of the parent birds, that many of the eggs sent to England purporting to be of this species are doubtfully genuine. But the Grey Phalarope is a vanishing species in Iceland, owing to the value attached to the eggs, and, unless further protected by a new 'Wild Bird's Protection Act,' must inevitably become extinct there as a breeding species. I would appeal, therefore, strongly to the better feelings of my countrymen, and beg them to be content with eggs of this species from Greenland or Spitzbergen or elsewhere. They can readily be supplied through American and German (*viâ* English) dealers. I daresay not more than twenty to thirty pairs breed in Iceland now.

Phalaropus hyperboreus (Linn.).

Red-necked Phalarope.

Native names: 'Sundhani' ('Swimming fowl'), 'Óðinshani' (Odin's fowl); and Gröndal adds some ponderous and deservedly antiquated ones, viz. 'landsþingisskrifari,' 'torfgrafar-álpt,' etc.

A summer visitor, arriving in May and remaining till August, or the beginning of September. Very common everywhere, and charmingly tame and confiding in its ways.

The nest is placed near water (fresh water, usually), in a tuft of rushes or sedge, and is usually well hidden, which seems unnecessary, because the bird is invariably ready to show you where it is. Four eggs of the usual pyriform Wader shape are laid, of a greenish buff, thickly spotted and blotched with black, and very much like those of the last species, from which they differ in being a shade smaller, rather darker in ground colour, and usually more thickly, but less boldly, spotted. Length about $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches, or rather less.

The plumage of this bird in summer is sooty grey above with buff streaks on the shoulders; white throat and sides of face, succeeded by a chestnut collar; breast sooty grey, rest of underparts white. In winter the plumage is totally different, but (somewhat remarkably, considering how abundant it is in Iceland) it is hardly ever seen in this dress in Britain, though the rarer

Grey Phalarope is comparatively common. Feet lobed —like those of the last species.

When calling this bird common everywhere, I perhaps ought to qualify it by saying that at very high elevations (like the Arnarvatnsheiði and other elevated plateaux), it is not abundant, though it cannot either be called rare. It is, unlike the last species, a fresh-water feeder by choice; it prefers tarns and lakes to rivers, and its chief food in the breeding season seems to be (I have watched it feeding many and many a time, sometimes not two yards away from me) that particularly offensive small grey-black fly, which is found by all river-, and especially lake-sides in Iceland in the summer, and which, particularly at times and in certain places, is capable of making life almost unbearable to human beings and their ponies. 'Expertus loquor.' The Red-necked Phalarope catches these noxious little pests on the wing (making pretty little darts when so doing), picks them off the rushes, and also feeds on the aquatic larvæ; the insect is to be found in the bird's œsophagus and gizzard in both stages, and forms, at that time, its principal food. It also eats any small living aquatic creatures, and I have found small mollusca (tiny *Limnæus*) mixed with the eaten food. The Red-necked Phalarope swims well and buoyantly, and looks on the water like a diminutive duck.

Gallinago cœlestis (Frenzel).
Common Snipe.

Native names: 'Hrossa-gaukr' (='horse-cuckoo,' from the neighing note which we call 'drumming' or 'bleating'—an obviously poetical name, and probably imported, considering that the 'gaukr,' *i.e.* cuckoo, or 'gowk,' is not found in Iceland; this name occurs in the Younger Edda of the thirteenth century). Also 'Mýri-snipa' (mire-snipe), corrupted into 'mýri-spíta' and 'myri-skitr,' which are meaningless.

A summer visitor, universally distributed in localities suited to its requirements, but nowhere, as far as I have seen, abundant. I never remember to have shot more than three or four in a day in autumn, but I ought to add that I have never once shot in Iceland to 'make a bag,' but only for the personal requirements of the party, and of the neighbours who have kindly allowed me to shoot over their ground. English sportsmen, I am sorry to say, who shoot for the bag, are neither respected nor liked in Iceland. I quote verbatim from a letter in my possession:—'He had had English sportsmen, who did not leave a very good name behind them, as their only object seemed to be to slaughter as many birds as they could, of any kind, eatable or useless, for the mere sake of killing.' Many British visitors, I am sorry to have to say, obviously care little indeed for the good name of their own country.

I have seen a number of Snipes' nests in Iceland. Usually, as elsewhere, they are well concealed in a grassy tussock on a bog, but I have found them in dry, open, sunny spots in thick birch scrub, and entirely unconcealed by a single grass-blade. The nest is made of fine dry grass, and the four eggs are olive brown in tint, spotted and blotched with dark brown. Length, a shade over $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Snipe are often very tame in Iceland. I remember being very much charmed with a pair at 'As (near 'Asbyrgi, that wonderful double rift in the north-east). I was making my morning toilet by a small waterfall near the farm, and just across the stream, on a small mud-bank not twenty yards from me, were a pair of snipe, who took no notice of me whatever, but were diligently probing, almost up to their eyes, for their breakfast in the mud. I watched them for some time, and the eager little wriggle of their heads, when their delicately sensitive bill-tips encountered the faint movement of some wee living thing down in the mud, was most interesting and instructive. The thing when extracted was too small, and too quickly disposed of, for me to see what it was.

The Great Snipe (*G. major*, Gm.) has never yet been obtained in Iceland, though certain guide-books mention it as not uncommon. I am not aware that they have the least foundation for the statement.

Tringa alpina, Linn. Dunlin.

Native names: 'Lóuþraell' ('Lóa's,' *i.e.* Golden Plover's 'thrall,' *cf.* 'Plover's page'). In Þingeyrar Sýsla there is another name for this bird, which Herra Gröndal spells 'Heiðarlaepa' in *Skýrsla* and 'Heiðarloepa' in *Isländische Vogelnamen.* It means 'Heath-trotter.'

A summer visitor, common in marshy places and by lakes and rivers, except in the barren interior. We only saw two pairs, as far as I recollect, on the Arnarvatnsheiði in 1900. The nest is usually well concealed in a grass tussock in a marsh, and is lined with a little grass, and the four eggs are light greenish drab, spotted and blotched with dark umber brown. Length, $1\frac{3}{16}$ inches. As is the case with most of the Limicolæ (Waders) both sexes incubate.

The Dunlin in breeding dress is dark above, with the feathers margined with buff and chestnut; light below, and wears a conspicuous black patch on the chest, unlike any other small Wader. Length about 8 inches, wing $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

But there is a small race of Dunlin, which breeds in Iceland and which Brehm (*Vög. Deutschl.*, p. 663, 1831) named *T. schinzii.* But in 1826 Bonaparte had named an American bird (better known as *T. fuscicollis Vieill.*) *Tringa schinzii* also. So that we have '*T. schinzii Br.*' and '*T. schinzii Bp.*,' and sad confusion has arisen from this, especially since '*T. schinzii Bp.*,' or Bonaparte's

Sandpiper, has of late years been detected as a straggler to Europe. Now Herra Gröndal has recorded *T. schinzii* from Iceland as having been shot by Preyer (see *Reise* in loc.), but he calls it *Tringa schinzii var. Chr. L. Br.*, which shows that he did not consider Preyer's bird to be the American Bonaparte's Sandpiper. Nevertheless Howard Saunders has taken it to mean the latter, and not the former (see *Man. Brit. Birds*, p. 567); and *T. fuscicollis*, to give it its true name, is duly enrolled as a visitor to Iceland. I have every reason for disagreeing with this conclusion. I have specimens of the little Dunlin (called on our east coast the 'Drain Dunlin,' from the places it frequents in preference to the shore) from Iceland, where my experience assures me that it is pretty common. Also, in 1900, Herra Gröndal kindly took me to his house and showed me a water-colour of *T. schinzii*, done by himself, in which the bird was represented with a black breast. Now the 'Drain Dunlin, *T. schinzii Br.*,' wears a black breast in summer like the ordinary Dunlin; Bonaparte's Sandpiper does not. Therefore, I must respectfully decline to admit the claims of the latter to a place amongst the birds of Iceland.

The food of the Dunlin consists of diminutive larvæ, crustacea, insects, vermes, etc.

Tringa subarquata (Güld.).
Curlew Sandpiper.

Native name: none.

Professor Newton was informed by the late William Proctor, who has been so often mentioned above, that he had received several specimens of this bird from Iceland. Proctor was in some degree the mentor of my youth, as he taught me to stuff birds and did not in any way repress the tendency to ornithology with which I was born. And I know that he could not well be mistaken respecting such a bird, well known on our British coasts. At the same time, unlike the Knot and others, it is not a bird which we should expect to visit Iceland, as its breeding-grounds (as far as we know them) are not in America, but in North Asia; and therefore it would go north-east from us and nowhere near Iceland. The bird has not been met with in Iceland since, and so far its occurrence there rests on Proctor's testimony. (See Newton, *Ibis*, 1864, p. 132.)

Tringa striata, Linn. Purple Sandpiper.

Native names: 'Sendlingur' (Sand-haunter), also 'Selningur,' a variant which, as Herra Gröndal says, is meaningless. Professor Newton adds 'fjalla-fœla' as a name for this species in summer dress, but Gröndal does not mention it, nor have I met any one who recognised it as a bird name.

A resident, common on the shores in winter, breeding

H. N. Dugmore, *Photo.*

Eirek's Jökull (6400 feet)

From the Arnarvatnsheiði.

on fells and high plateaux, where its nest, owing to the vast area of country suitable to its requirements, is not commonly met with. I have found, or been at the finding of, six in Iceland, and have met with it more frequently on the Arnarvatnsheiði than anywhere, where it is the characteristic small Wader.

It nests on elevated bare ground in June, as soon as the ground is dry enough after the melting of the snow. The nest is placed amongst a patch of *Dryas octopetala*, *Loiseleuria procumbens*, or an absolutely prostrate willow, and is quite unconcealed, the bird trusting to its obscure colouring and the withered-leaf colour of the eggs to escape observation. The nest is a mere hollow—as deep as the eggs—with a few dead willow, Dryas, or Vaccinium leaves in it, an odd Ptarmigan's feather or two, and a few off the bird's own breast as lining. I have, however, found one nest (which was on a wet fell) rather substantially lined with grass. The eggs, four in number, are much like the Dunlin's (and many of the eggs sold for the former are those of the latter only), but are a shade larger (1½ inches long, or nearly), and when fresh decidedly greener in ground colour; but this beautiful tint soon fades into a light olivaceous brown. The bird sits very close indeed. I have never met with the nest of this species in Iceland at a less elevation than 1200 to 1500 feet above the sea.

In summer the bird is generally dusky, thickly spotted on the breast with black and grey, and on the crown and scapulars with buff and white. In winter

it is more uniformly dusky, but the best distinguishing marks at both seasons are the uniform dark, nearly black, rump which, with the back, has an obscure purple sheen which is most noticeable in winter dress, and by the three white secondary quills which show conspicuously on the wing. Length 8½ inches, wing about 5 inches.

Howard Saunders' statement that this is 'the most plentiful of its genus in Iceland' (*Man. Brit. Birds*, p. 579) is somewhat misleading, I think. Probably five pairs of Dunlins breed in Iceland to one pair of Purple Sandpipers; and the latter is much more numerous, I feel certain, on the shores in winter and autumn, in the aggregate, than on the fells in summer. Of course this is a difficult question to decide, but I believe I have travelled the country sufficiently to arrive at some sort of an idea on the point.

The birds feed on small insects, crustacea and mollusca, in summer, frequenting the margins of hill tarns for this purpose; in winter they live on the coast, preferring those where there is seaweed (and rocks) to bare sandy coasts. Quite silent at the nest, and very nearly so at all times.

Tringa canutus, Linn. KNOT.

Native name: Rauðbrystingur (Red-breasted one), a name which it shares with the Grey Phalarope.

A spring and autumn migrant, visiting the coasts, sometimes in considerable numbers, on its way to and

from its Arctic breeding-grounds in the extreme north of America. No naturalist, as far as I am aware, has ever seen it inland in Iceland during the breeding season, or in any place where there was the least likelihood of its nesting, so that Faber's surmise that it would probably be found breeding on the uplands in Iceland remains unfulfilled, and is likely to.

The Knot reaches Iceland about the end of May, and soon moves on. At this time it has light chestnut underparts; black back, the feathers bordered with white and spotted with chestnut; head and hind neck dull red with dusky streaks. Length 10 inches, wing 6½ inches. The winter dress, and that of the young in their first autumn, are totally unlike that of the summer. See Saunders' *Manual*, or *British Birds, their Nests and Eggs.*

Calidris arenaria (Linn.). Sanderling.

Native name: 'Sanderla.'

A passing migrant in some numbers in spring and autumn, on its way to and from its breeding-grounds in Greenland and Arctic America. It also breeds in the extreme north of Asia. Howard Saunders opines that 'it undoubtedly nests in some districts of Iceland.' I personally hardly know what to say. In the *Ibis* for 1886 (p. 50) I described the discovery of a nest which we were confident was a Sanderling's. I knew the Sanderling familiarly enough, and followed the parent which left the nest for a hundred yards or more,

with my glasses focussed upon it at a distance of ten to twenty yards. It had unmistakably a chestnut head and neck and a pure white breast, and I returned to the nest absolutely certain that I had been following a Sanderling. By ill-luck neither of us carried a gun that day. The eggs were almost on the point of hatching, and were in appearance miniatures of the Whimbrel's eggs, corresponding exactly to the plate of the Sanderling's eggs in Nares' *Narrative*. I submitted the carbolised eggs, on my return to England, to the examination of a gentleman whose judgment on such matters I consider to be equal to anybody's. He offered to buy them, miserable specimens as they were, for £2 each, which showed pretty conclusively what he thought of them. Afterwards Carter extracted the chicks in bits from his pair of eggs, and I did the same with mine—and they all had minute hind toes! The Sanderling has none, not even the rudimentary nail, which, as Mr. W. E. Clarke has shown us (*Ibis*, 1892, p. 402), is always to be found on the Kittiwake, where all other gulls have a hind toe. In the Kittiwake the absence of the hind toe is clearly due to arrested development; in the Sanderling, as no rudiment survives, it is possible that it exists in the embryo and is lost at hatching, as the 'egg-tooth' is. At all events, these four hind toes cannot drive out of my mind the conviction that on that day I saw a Sanderling leave her nest.

The eggs of the Sanderling, as hinted above, are of an olivaceous buff, spotted with light umber brown,

and are a reduced copy of the Whimbrel's egg. Their length is nearly $1\frac{3}{16}$ inches.

The Sanderling was seen on Grimsey in June 1820 by Faber. In 1860 an egg was offered to Preyer. Proctor saw the Sanderling on Grimsey, also, in 1837, and subsequently had eggs sent to him which were said to be Sanderlings'. I recollect some of these in his possession—they struck me as being those of the Ringed Plover. Professor Newton also mentions this bird's eggs being made to do duty for those of the Sanderling.

The Sanderling in summer dress has a chestnut head and neck; back dark brown, the feathers edged with chestnut and tipped with white. Shoulder black (it shows very conspicuously in flight, in all stages of plumage). Length 8 inches, wing $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The winter dress, and young bird's first autumnal dress, are entirely different from the summer plumage. The food consists of small insects, crustacea, worms, minute mollusca; up country, in breeding quarters, they seem glad to eat small buds of Arctic plants, as they doubtless get there before minute animal life has quite awakened from the long winter.

[**Machetes pugnax** (Linn.). Ruff.

Native name: 'Aflogakragi' or 'Kragi.'

According to Faber (*Prodromus*, p. 30) a female was shot near Reykjavik early in September 1820. Gröndal adds, 'not noticed since,' and in *Verzeichniss* he puts

it in brackets as dubious; and, though there is no particular reason why it should not stray to Iceland, as it has done to the Faeroes, I think I shall follow Herra Gröndal's example here.]

Totanus calidris (Linn.). Redshank.

Native name: 'Stelkur' (='Stalker').

A summer visitor; nowhere, as far as I have seen, abundant, but universally distributed in small numbers. It arrives in May and leaves in September, a few individuals remaining somewhat later. The nest is always well concealed, amongst long grass or sedge, or in a willow patch, and always near water. It is lined with a little grass, and the four eggs are stone buff in ground colour, blotched with light-bluish grey and spotted with dark brown, chiefly at the large end, and are $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches long. I have more than once found the nest on an islet in a fresh-water lake in Iceland. The bird has a sporting gamey sort of look, but should never be shot, as it is coarse-flavoured and useless for the table.

It is readily to be distinguished by its brown upper parts (with a white rump) streaked and barred with very dark brown; its white underparts spotted on the throat, breast, and sides with light brown; barred tail, white bar across the wing (showing very conspicuously in flight) and long orange legs. Length 11 inches, wing $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Gröndal merely says, 'common on the coasts,' mean-

ing, no doubt, that it flocks on the coasts in spring on arrival, and in autumn previous to departure, as it does in England.

Limosa belgica (Gmel.). Black-tailed Godwit.

Native name: 'Jaðrakan' (with variants, 'Jarðreka, 'Jaðreki,' older 'jaðrakarn'). This name can be explained to mean 'earth-shoveller' (Jörð—reka) but Gröndal prefers to consider it a Gaelic word 'adharcan' (Lapwing), borrowed, and applied to the wrong bird. 'Jaðrakarn' occurs in the Younger Edda.

A summer visitor, arriving in April (1st May, according to Nielsen), breeding only, as Faber states (*Prodromus*, p. 25) in 'Arnes and Rángárvalla Sýslur in the south-east, leaving the country in the beginning of September. Very seldom met with elsewhere in Iceland, even as a wanderer.

The nest is a slight affair of grass amongst sedge or other long herbage in a marsh, and the four pear-shaped eggs are of a pale olive brown with darker brown spots—coloured very much like the Whimbrel's eggs—and measure about $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches long.

The bird in summer has the head, neck, and breast light chestnut, with dark stripes on the crown, and black bars on the breast; mantle brown, blotched with black; belly, rump, and a bar across the wing, white; tail-feathers black, with white bases. Legs and bill

long, the latter measuring 4 to 4½ inches, and slightly up-turned. Total length 16 inches, wing 9 inches; female rather the larger. All the chestnut colour is lost in winter plumage, and the dark tints generally are softened.

The food consists of insects, worms, crustacea, etc. Faber says 'im ventriculo Wasserpflanzen,' but this is quite contrary to the general experience.

Numenius arquata (Linn.). CURLEW.

Native names: 'Spói,' 'Stori Spói.'

A rare straggler in autumn. Faber obtained the first historical specimen at Reykjavik on September 6, 1819. Since then, a large flock, as Herra Gröndal states, visited the south coast in the autumn of 1875, but did not stay long. One at least was killed, and Herra Gröndal obtained a skin (*Verzeichniss*, p. 361). In *Skýrsla* he also mentions that a flock visited 'Alftanes in 1876, from which one was obtained for the Reykjavik Museum. It is singular that he does not mention this latter occurrence in the *Verzeichniss*, published in 1886. Possibly the two occurrences are the same, and the latter date the correct one. Nielsen also gives an occurrence (*Ornis*, 1887, p. 157) without date or locality, which may again refer to the same.

The Curlew has never been known to breed in Iceland, nor is it particularly likely to do so. It is a large edition of the Whimbrel, without the two broad sooty stripes on the crown. Length 21 to 26

inches, the female the largest, and with the longest bill; wing $11\frac{3}{4}$ to $12\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Food (when on the shores) crustacea, worms, and any small creatures; inland they live on insects and berries, but seem to prefer small helices to anything, and eat enormous numbers of them.

Numenius phœopus (Linn.). Whimbrel.

Native names: 'Spói,' 'Litla Spói'—from the bird's note.

A summer visitor, arriving in April and leaving in September. One of the commonest birds in Iceland; one of the most invariable recollections which a visitor to Iceland bears away with him is that of a Whimbrel perched on the apex of a rock or boulder, screaming at him. It breeds everywhere on grassy land, or drier marsh, from the high fells of the interior almost down to sea-level, but is most abundant at moderate elevations. The nest is a small hollow, generally on a hummock, but sometimes between two, and is not much concealed. The four eggs (sometimes three only) are olive brown, blotched and spotted with sepia brown, and are generally very pyriform. Length about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. There is seldom any lining to the nest. I once found, lying beside a nest containing eggs, a little heap of small rounded gravel about as big as peas, which must have been recently brought from a river-bed about a mile off, necessitating a good many journeys there; I surmised that this might have been

prepared for the young birds, when hatched, to digest their food with.

Whimbrels' eggs, with those of the Golden Plover, seem to be the staple prey of the Raven and Richardson's Skua. I have seen many encounters between Whimbrels and the latter robber, which have generally ended favourably to the right when there were both the Whimbrels present; but a pair of Skuas to a single Whimbrel is too great odds. I once saw a Raven, on plunder bent, get a sound thrashing from a pair of Whimbrels (*Ibis*, 1886, p. 48).

The Whimbrel is a fair bird for the table, but no more can be said. The sportsman in Iceland mentally gives it the same place in his estimation as to the French partridge at home, and does not, therefore, shoot it when he can get Golden Plover or Snipe.

The plumage of the head, neck, breast, and upper surface is pale grey-brown with darker centres to the feathers; the crown has two broad sooty-black stripes covering the greater part of it. Rump, chin, and centre of belly white; axillaries (the long narrow feathers under the wing) white, barred with brown; bill long and decurved. Total length 16 to 17 inches, female a little the larger; wing 9½ inches.

Food, insects, worms, crustacea, land-snails.

Numenius hudsonicus, Latham.
AMERICAN WHIMBREL.

Native name: None.

One specimen of this bird, received by Dr. Kjœrbölling from Iceland (*Naumannia*, vi. p. 308; see also Newton, Baring Gould, p. 413) furnishes the only existing record of this bird's appearance in Iceland, and it has only once besides been recognised elsewhere in Europe. It might rather have been expected that *N. borealis*, the Eskimo Curlew, would have been the species to stray to Iceland rather than the present one; it has occurred half a dozen times in Britain, and proportionately elsewhere in western Europe.

Numenius hudsonicus may be distinguished from the Whimbrel by its rather smaller size (length 14 to 16 inches, the female larger); under surface of the body tinged with buff, and, especially, rufous axillaries (see last species).

Sterna macrura, Naum. ARCTIC TERN.

Native names: 'Kría,' 'Þerna,' the former suggesting very accurately the bird's note, the second probably borrowed from the Danish 'Terna.'

A summer visitor in considerable numbers, common on the coast, and penetrating a good distance up the rivers. It breeds in colonies, mostly on or near the coast, but often on lakes a great distance from it

(*e.g.* Mývatn, Þingvallavatn, Arnarvatn). The nest is a slight hollow in the ground, and is usually without any lining; the two eggs (occasionally three) are a little over 1½ inches in length and very variable in coloration; the ground colour varies from light blue-grey to grey-buff, and from a warm ochre to olive; and they are spotted with blue-grey and dark brown.

Arctic Terns are very bold at their nests, and will stoop at any intruder's head, and often with some effect. I saw one dash repeatedly at the head of a girl who was collecting eggs on an island in an Icelandic lake; once the bird descended with such force as to break several of the eggs she was carrying on her head in a basket. Two days later I was unkind enough to be immensely amused at the predicament of my companion (Mr. Tom Carter, now doing good ornithological work in Australia). He had waded to a little islet in a lake, and was returning with some eggs in his cap, very gingerly, for the lava bottom was full of nasty cracks. The terns spied him at their sanctuary, and hastened up, and one vicious bird added very materially to his anxieties by rapping him on his undefended head with its bill, with sufficient force to draw blood in more than one place. The Arctic Tern reaches Iceland in May, and leaves in late August; but these dates, like all others respecting the arrivals and departures of birds in Iceland, are subject to season and weather, and vary considerably.

The Arctic Tern is not likely to be confused with any other bird visiting Iceland. It has a black cap; is blue-grey above, pearl-grey below; bill and feet bright red; tail deeply forked, and the whole bird of a slender and elegant build. Length 14½ inches, wing 10 inches. No other species of Tern has been ascertained to occur in Iceland, though Mr. Baring Gould suggests that he saw the Common Tern, and I have an idea that I have seen a similar statement in a guide-book or somewhere.

Their normal food consists of small fish (of useless shore species, mostly) and shrimps, and other crustacea. What they feed upon inland I do not remember, beyond the recollection that they eat insects of any kind they can get. They are liable to vicissitudes in this respect; in 1885 we found great numbers of the downy young dead, some in the nest, some about anywhere, on the Mývatn islands. Their stomachs contained nothing but tapeworms, that we could see.

Larus canus, Linn. Common Gull.

Native name: None.

This Gull is unaccountably scarce in Iceland—unaccountably, because it breeds numerously all round the coasts of Norway. But it is not as uncommon in Iceland as is generally believed. Gröndal only records one occurrence, but Professor Newton picked up a skin in Reykjavik in 1858; and I certainly saw three at the same time, flying about in the

harbour at Heimaey in the Vestmannaeyjar on June 3, 1900, and three or four more between there and Reykjavik.

The Kittiwake is the only Gull it is likely to be confused with in Iceland, but that bird has always dark legs and feet (immature examples a black bill also). The Kittiwake is, besides, slenderer built, and has no hind toe.

The Common Gull has the back and wings grey, primaries blackish at their ends, rest of the body white; legs and feet greenish yellow. In winter and in immature plumage the head is mottled with grey-brown. Length 18½ inches, wing 14 inches.

Larus marinus, Linn.

Greater Black-backed Gull.

Native names: 'Svart-bakur,' 'Veiði-bjalla' (this appears to mean 'hunting-bell,' which seems to suggest the cumbrous and, to us, meaningless periphrases of early Icelandic poetry); for the immature bird, 'Kafla-bringur' (='Spotted breast').

Resident and common, breeding from the sea-coast to the lakes of the desert interior. The nest is placed on a sea-cliff, skerry, or an islet in an inland tarn; the eggs (three in number, or only two) are rather variable in size, but average three inches in length; their colour is stone-buff and they are spotted with dark blue-grey and umber brown.

The adult bird is white, with dark grey-brown mantle and wings; wing-quills (primaries) nearly black, tipped with white; legs and feet flesh pink. Length 30 inches, wing 20 inches; females smaller. Young birds are dirty white, mottled with brown, and show no black on the back till their third year. Young gulls are very difficult to distinguish, as a rule, but there ought to be little difficulty with the young of this species in Iceland, as *Larus fuscus* and *L. argentatus* do not occur there. On the score of size, they can be separated from all but *L. glaucus* or *L. leucopterus*, from which the black on their primaries will distinguish them.

As a bold and greedy robber, this bird comes in for a good deal of persecution in the breeding season. It preys on fish; eggs of any kind of bird; young, wounded, or weakly birds; young lambs or any kind of carrion. But it is a picturesque bird of a graceful and stately flight, and a great ornament to the shores and sea.

Larus glaucus, Brünnich. Glaucous Gull.

Native names: 'Hvít-mafur,' 'Hvít-fugl'; the young, 'Grá-máfur.'

Resident, and pretty common round the coasts, but not seen in the interior (as in Novaia Zemlya, for instance), nor does it breed there, but in crags, etc., round the coast. It is not, however, in my experience, anything like as abundant as the last species (*pace*

Faber), and voyaging round the coast three Blackbacks will be seen for one Glaucous Gull. The eggs are normally a little smaller than those of the Blackback, but it is not safe to trust to this as a distinction, as the Blackback's eggs are variable in size: the most that can be said is, that Glaucous Gulls' eggs are usually under 3 inches in length, Greater Blackbacks' usually above 3 inches. In colour they are almost identical. This is enough to show that it is desirable to take the Glaucous Gull's eggs in Iceland for oneself, rather than purchase such as may be offered for sale at the various ports.

The Glaucous Gull is white, with a pearl-grey mantle, and no black on the flight-feathers, which are white, pearl-grey at their bases; legs and feet bright pink. Length 29 to 31 inches, wing 18 to 19 inches; females the smaller. Young birds are mottled with light brown, but have the white wings; they take several years to reach maturity.

The Glaucous Gull is just as bold a robber, and fully as omnivorous, as the Greater Blackback. I saw a pair hustle, and drive off without difficulty, a Sea-eagle in Novaia Zemlya. I was the more annoyed, because the Sea-eagle's presence in that country had not been made a matter of absolute certainty by means of a skin; and I was lying in wait for that one, in the hopes of acquiring his, when the gulls made their unwelcome appearance, and turned him back.

Larus leucopterus, Faber. Iceland Gull.

Native names: 'Hvítmáfur,' etc., like the last, from the white flight-feathers.

A winter visitor, only, from farther north, and in no great numbers. First described by 'Fugl Faber' from specimens he obtained in Iceland, and recognised as different from *L. glaucus.* He has given a long and minute description and account of the species in his *Prodromus* (pp. 91-98). Its breeding-grounds are in Jan Mayen and Greenland.

The bird may be shortly described as a small copy of *Larus glaucus,* with proportionately longer wings; legs and feet yellowish pink. Length 22 inches, wing 16 to 17 inches; females rather the smaller. In winter plumage, the head and neck are more or less flecked with pale brown. Young birds resemble those of *L. glaucus,* but are smaller. This species appears on the Iceland coasts about the end of September, and remains till the end of April, a few immature individuals remaining even longer. In habits it resembles the 'Burgomaster,' as sailors call the Glaucous Gull, and feeds on fish, marine creatures, and garbage of any kind. Its flight is easier and more graceful than that of the Glaucous.

Rissa tridactyla (Linn.). Kittiwake.

Native names: 'Rita,' 'Ritsa,' 'Skegla.'

A summer visitor in great numbers, probably as great as of all other Laridæ put together, if the Arctic Tern be excepted. It arrives in Iceland about the middle of March and leaves at the end of September. Many of the individuals are in immature dress, this species requiring two, or more, years to arrive at maturity. Doubtless some of the birds in immature dress breed. The nest is placed on a cliff ledge, or on the turf of a marine islet, and consists of a few bents of dead grass, or scraps of seaweed. The eggs (two, sometimes three) are light in ground colour, varying from light grey to stone buff, occasionally with an olive tinge, and are blotched and mottled with blue grey and umber brown. Length under $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

The Kittiwake may be distinguished from all other European gulls by the absence of a hind toe, though traces of this organ are sometimes found on one, or both feet. Head, neck, tail, and underparts white; mantle grey; wings (flight-feathers) with a good deal of black; legs and feet black. Length $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches, wing 12 inches. Immature birds have a grey nape, blackish shoulder, and black or sooty tip to the tail.

The food consists of fish, crustacea, and any small marine creatures.

Pagophila eburnea (Phipps). Ivory Gull.

Native name: 'Hvítmáfur'? ''Ismáfur'?

A scarce occasional visitor in winter or early spring, and only noticed of recent years. The late William Proctor received two specimens from the north (probably Grimsey), and these, I believe, were the first record (Newton, *Ibis*, 1864, p. 132). Herra Gröndal saw a skin in a merchant's store in April 1879, and calls the bird otherwise unknown to him. The only other one for which I can give chapter and verse, though I have heard of others being seen, was shot in the Eyjafjörðr early in the year 1894, and is now in my collection. I do not fancy that it would be difficult to obtain specimens along the north coast in any fairly severe winter.

The Ivory Gull is of an ivory white all over, with a subdued rosy tint when alive, which soon fades after death; legs and feet black. Length 18 inches, wing 13 inches, or a little more. The immature birds have a greyish head, and upper parts spotted with black; tail-feathers tipped with black, and a black bar on the flight-feathers. The Ivory Gull belies its refined appearance, as it feeds greedily upon whale and seal carcases and any marine offal, as well as small marine creatures.

Stercorarius catarrhactes (Linn.).
Great Skua.

Native names: 'Skúmur' (Dusky [bird]?), 'Hafskúmur,' 'Hákalla- (or Hákarla-) skumur' (='Sea-carle,' a name also given to the *Scymnus microcephalus*, or Arctic shark).

Resident in considerable numbers, breeding chiefly on the south coast, where there are four colonies (three of them consisting of a great many pairs of birds) mentioned by Faber. There are also two small colonies in the north, in Þingeyrar Sýsla. It does not appear that in any of the former in the south there has been any decrease in individuals since Faber's time, except perhaps in the one in the Ölfusá.

The eggs are laid in a slight hollow in the shingle or sand, and are two in number, and are extremely like certain varieties of the Lesser Black-backed Gull's eggs; their length is a little over $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and their colour an olive brown with darker umber brown spots and streaks. Eggs are seldom to be found in the nests before May 11. The parents are very aggressive at the nest, and Faber describes the exciting time that he and his dog went through at one of the larger breeding colonies in the south.

This species is considerably the largest of the four Skuas, measuring 24 inches in length, or a little more; gaining, too, nothing of its length from the possession of elongated tail-feathers, like the other three species;

the wing measures 16 inches. The plumage of both sexes is alike, viz. brown all over, with darker wings and tail, and fulvous tips to the feathers of the head, throat, and upper parts; the wing-quills have white bases which form a conspicuous white bar, hardly visible except in flight. The young birds are rather more mottled with fulvous, and show very little tendency to hackle-shaped feathers on the neck, which are a feature of the adult.

The Great Skua is a powerful bird, of strong flight, and is often seen many miles from land, but does not, in Iceland, go any distance inland to breed as some of the smaller Skuas do, preferring, for that purpose, sand-dunes near the sea. It is a bold and rapacious creature, robbing gulls and gannets, at their fishing-grounds, of the fruits of their labour; but no carrion comes amiss to it, and it is quite capable (and occasionally inclined that way) of killing and eating smaller gulls. The nestlings wear a grey down, and by the end of August are full grown.

Stercorarius pomatorhinus (Temm.).

Pomatorhine Skua.

Native name: 'Kjói' (partim).

An irregular visitor to the coast from autumn to spring, occasionally shot along the shores. I have not myself seen it, not having devoted any attention to the coast-line, nor been in Iceland later than the end of

August, but about that time and earlier (*e.g.*, July 25) I have seen this bird at sea consorting with the next species within a few miles of the coasts of Iceland. Faber declares that it bred near Eyrarbakki, in June 1821, but as no one else has even suggested such a possibility, he must have been mistaken, especially since he describes the eggs as no longer than those of Richardson's Skua. It breeds in Western Greenland, north of Egedesminde, and more or less in Northern Asia.

The adult is dark brown above, black on the head; neck white with light yellow hackles on the sides; underparts white in adults, with a brown band across the chest when partially immature, and the underparts more or less barred with dusky. The most characteristic feature is the two central tail-feathers, which are prolonged four inches beyond the rest and turned half round, with the blade at right angles to them, the greatest diameter being vertical and not horizontal, like the rest of the tail. This peculiarity can be seen a long way off. Length 21 inches, wing $14\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Quite young birds are brown all over, with lighter rusty tips to most of the feathers, and the two tail-feathers but little elongated.

Like other Skuas, the Pomatorhine robs gulls and terns of the produce of their fishing, and will eat any dead offal, floating or cast ashore.

Stercorarius crepidatus (Gmel.).

Richardson's Skua.

Native name: 'Kjói' (partim).

A summer visitor in considerable numbers, from the end of April to mid-September, breeding (singly, not in colonies, like the last two species) here and there, not only near the sea, but far into the interior—wherever, in fact, other birds are sufficiently numerous for it to find a livelihood by robbing them of their eggs and young.

The nest is generally situated in a little hollow on high ground; it consists of a small depression in the turf or lichen large enough to contain the two eggs; occasionally it is on the top of a little mound if the hollow be a damp one. The eggs are very like normal examples of those of the Brown-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*); they are olive brown in colour, spotted and blotched with dark brown, and $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches long.

There are two varieties of this species—what are known as the 'light' and 'dark' forms—and in Iceland they are about equally common. A breeding pair may consist of one light and one dark bird, two light or two dark ones. The dark form is sooty brown all over, rather darker on crown, wings, and tail. The light form has light underparts with a quite white breast, and a light yellow patch of hackle-shaped feathers on the side of the head (this is indistinctly indicated in the dark form also). There are also intermediate

forms, but I am inclined to attribute many of these to immaturity—as the young birds are all dusky to begin with, and I have only once met with a decided intermediate form amongst old birds in Iceland in the summer. In all adults the two central tail-feathers are about three inches longer than the rest of the tail, and are narrowed to a blunt point, but are not twisted vertically, like those of the Pomatorhine Skua. Length 20 inches, wing 13 to 13½ inches. Young birds are of a pale brown, with darker streaks and bars, and rusty tips to the feathers of the upper parts; central tail-feathers not perceptibly elongated.

The Arctic, or Richardson's Skua (all the Skuas are 'Arctic') is very bold at its nest, and stoops repeatedly at the head of an intruder in a rather threatening manner, but never actually strikes except with its wings. It gains a rather disreputable living on the proceeds of others' industry. Seeing a Gull or Tern wending homewards from the fishing with the appearance of a comfortably filled crop, this bird attacks it with great apparent ferocity, stooping at it like a Hawk, but apparently only striking with its wings, as above, until the persecuted bird tries to lighten itself by ejecting the fish in its crop; this the Skua, by a quick turn, catches, usually before it reaches the water. All the Skuas have this moss-trooper disposition, but it is oftenest observed in this, the commonest species. Inland, in the breeding season, they rob other birds of their eggs or young (especially, in Iceland, the Golden Plover and Whimbrel), one

Skua often engaging the parent in charge of the nest, while the other secures the booty. On the sea they will also pick up anything they see, or alight on the water and gorge on a dead bird or floating carcase of any kind.

Stercorarius parasiticus (Linn.).
Buffon's Skua.

Native name: 'Kjói' (partim).

A rare occasional wanderer to the coasts, breeding in Greenland, Spitzbergen, north Norway, etc. I do not think that Icelanders usually distinguish between the three smaller Skuas; this one is probably not so uncommon on the coasts in spring and autumn as the existing records would seem to indicate. Professor Newton saw several at Kirkjuvogr (south-west), and obtained a specimen shot at Keflavik in the same neighbourhood; this was in 1858. In 1860 Preyer saw a skin in Reykjavik. I saw two near Lánganes (north-east), within a couple of miles of the coast, in August 1894. No Icelander has recorded it.

Buffon's Skua is a small edition of the light form of Richardson's Skua, with a still longer tail, the two central feathers, which are very narrow, projecting 7 to 9 inches beyond the rest of the tail. In all stages they may be separated from Richardson's Skua by the size, and by the black shafts of the primary quills (except the two outer ones on each side, which are white). In

Richardson's Skua the shafts of all the primaries are white at all ages. Length 23 inches (14½ without the central tail-feathers), wing about 12 inches.

Buffon's Skua feeds on any animal matter, insects, crustacea, stolen fish and eggs, mice, lemmings (in Europe), and sometimes moorland berries.

Alca torda, Linn. Razorbill.

Native names: ''Alca,' 'Klumba'; to which Herra Gröndal adds in brackets 'Klumbunefja' (Club-bill), and 'drunnefja' or 'drumbnefja' (Pole- or beam-bill).

A common resident, breeding in suitable localities round the coasts, assembling in large flocks during the winter, especially off the south coasts. It nests in colonies, on ledges and in holes of sea-cliffs, laying one large egg, usually white in ground colour, but sometimes of a light maroon or umber brown, blotched and scribbled with dark brown and black. They are usually less pear-shaped and rounder at the small end than Guillemot's eggs, and are about 2¾ inches long.

The bird is black above, with a sooty throat which in winter turns white; rest of underparts white; bill flat with a thin curved white line across the middle, and another from the top of the bill to the eye. Length 17 inches, wing 7½ inches.

The food consists of fish, and any marine creatures of suitable size. The Razorbill passes most of its time

at sea, and does not approach the coasts closely, except in stormy weather and during the breeding season.

Alca impennis, Linn.

Great Auk, Garefowl.

Native name: 'Geir-fugl,' etymology uncertain.

Formerly a resident in Iceland, much more abundant in Labrador and Newfoundland; but the bird has not been seen alive for more than fifty years, and is undoubtedly extinct. Its extinction is, no doubt, due to man's agency. For it was a large bird, with a stupid insensibility to danger, and also, unfortunately for itself, it was so short-winged as to be flightless; and it was good to eat. It could easily be overtaken and knocked on the head with a stick; it even allowed itself to be driven on board a ship over a plank or a sail stretched between the deck and the shore. We hear of Great Auks being thus obtained by the ton weight, and afterwards salted in barrels, so that the fishermen and others who visited the Newfoundland coasts and fishing banks counted on a supply of these birds to victual their ships. They seem also to have been killed there merely for their feathers. Nothing could withstand such a wholesale persecution, let alone a bird of so confiding or stupid a disposition, which only laid one egg in the year, so the Great Auk in North America vanished from the earth like *Rytina stelleri*, the Manatee of Behring's Straits, which only

survived for twenty-seven years its discovery by man.

In Iceland the Garefowl was nothing like so abundant; it seems to have been confined to four or five small southern islands, and not to have visited the mainland at all. These islands were called 'Geirfuglasker'—Garefowl Skerries—from the bird's presence on them. There was one near Papey in the Berufjörðr (south-east); one on the Vestmannaeyjar (south); at neither of these do Great Auks ever appear to have been common. Of the other islands, one was the Geirfuglasker off Cape Reykjanes (south-west), where a considerable number of Auks used to breed, and whence many birds and eggs were obtained; this island, owing to submarine volcanic disturbances, disappeared entirely in the year 1830, and its place is now only marked by beating surf. There is another skerry of the same group, a mile or two farther out to sea than the last, called the Geirfugladrángr, but of this we have very little detailed information; and lastly there is, nearest Cape Reykjanes, from which it is only about nine or ten miles distant, an island called Eldey (Fire-island) or the Meal-sack, on which a good number of Garefowl used to breed, and upon which the last-known living Auks were killed in the year 1844. They had probably vanished finally from the New World some years previously. The whole history is a miserable tale of reckless destruction and wastefulness, and any one who would learn further details is referred to Professor Newton's paper in the *Ibis* (1861,

p. 374, etc.), Mr. Symington Grieve's *The Great Auk or Garefowl* (1885), and the same gentleman's 'Recent Information about the Great Auk' (*Transactions*, Edinburgh Field Naturalists, etc., Society, 1888).

The egg, as most people know (for even the veriest Gallio must have looked with awe and attention upon an egg valued at about £300) is a large copy of the Razorbill's egg; there are between sixty and seventy in existence, about eighty skins, five-and-twenty more or less complete skeletons, besides a great many odd bones. The bird was a large edition of the Razorbill also, but about 2 feet 8 inches long. It had a large and conspicuous white patch between the eye and bill. As already mentioned, it was so short in the wings as to be incapable of flight, but was a wonderful diver and swimmer. It was therefore physically incapable of breeding in any place where it was safe from man, and could only land and breed where the rock sloped up from the water's edge. For that reason it probably was very scarce on the Geirfugladrángr—'drángr' is a name only applied to islands with precipitous sides.

Uria troile (Linn.). Guillemot.

Native name: 'Lángnefja,' or 'Lángvia,' and the 'ringed' or 'bridled' variety is called 'Hringvia,' which name is sometimes misapplied to the Razorbill.

Resident and abundant, especially in the south; many remaining to winter. It breeds in thousands on

suitable sea-cliffs, and in common with Puffins and Razorbills, etc., it is snared in considerable quantities and eaten; it makes a better provender than would be expected, too, though I should hesitate to assert that a Guillemot is equal to a Woodcock.

The single egg is large, and pear-shaped, and very variable in tint; the usual colours are white or a more or less bright green, blotched and spotted with dark brown and black, sometimes pale brown or pale green spotted and scribbled with light brown, or any of the above ground colours without markings of any sort. Length 3¼ inches. If their egg is taken, they lay another in a day or two.

The bird is sooty brown above, and on the throat (the latter turning white in winter), with white underparts. Length 18 inches, wing 7½ inches; bill from forehead to tip about 2 inches.

The food consists of small fish and other marine creatures, and the bird is an expert diver like all the Alcidæ.

The 'ringed' or 'bridled' Guillemot is only a variety of this species; it has a ring of white feathers round the eye, and a white line proceeding backwards along the furrow behind the eye.

Uria bruennichi (E. Sabine).

Brünnich's Guillemot.

Native name: 'Stuttnefja' (Short-bill).

Resident, but not common, breeding in small colonies near the other Guillemots, especially on the northern coasts (*e.g.* on Grímsey); elsewhere it is doubtful if it breeds at all. It is a much more Arctic bird in its range than *U. troile*, and as its eggs are not to be distinguished from those of that bird with anything like certainty—if at all—the collector had better obtain Brünnich's Guillemot's eggs from Greenland, Jan Mayen, Spitzbergen, or from other places where the Common Guillemot is not found. The birds are to be distinguished, however, with care. The bill of this species is much stouter and somewhat shorter (1½ to 1¾ inches from forehead to tip), and has a white line along the edge of the upper mandible behind the nostrils. The length of the two birds is much the same (18 inches), but Brünnich's has a proportionately longer wing, viz. 8 to 9 inches, to 7½ inches in the Common Guillemot.

Its food in a general way will doubtless consist of much the same viands as the Common Guillemots, *i.e.* in Iceland. But in more fishless seas farther north it varies a good deal. Three which I dissected off Novaia Zemlya in 1895 had been feeding exclusively on small marine crustacea (*Copepoda*, etc.), none of them half an inch long; this was, however, in cold water, and amongst the drift ice.

Uria grylle (Linn.). Black Guillemot.

Native names: 'Teista' (*Scotice*, 'Tystie'), otherwise 'Þeista,' 'kofa,' 'teistukofa,' 'péturskofa,' none of which I have heard used but the first-mentioned.

Common and resident all round the coasts, breeding in cracks of rocks and under boulders on sea islets and skerries; sometimes in sea-cliffs. The Black Guillemot, unlike the rest of the family, lays two eggs at a time, of a whitish colour, sometimes with a green tint, spotted and blotched with blue-grey and dark brown. Length 2¼ inches, or a little more.

The bird is sooty black, with a white patch on the wing, like a Blackcock's. The legs, feet, and the inside of the mouth are of a bright reddish orange. Length 14 inches, wing 6½ inches. In winter the upper parts are much flecked with white, and the underparts nearly white.

It is a pretty, tame little creature, and feeds upon little fish, crustacea, and marine 'various.' On the west coast of Scotland I have found crane-flies (*Tipulæ*) inside it, picked, no doubt, in a drowned state off the water.

Mergulus alle (Linn.). Little Auk.

Native name: 'Haftirðill' or 'Haftyrðill.' Mohr christened it 'Halkíon,' but the name has never been generally accepted. The first means 'a little object on the sea.'

Resident, not in great numbers in the summer, as its principal breeding-places are farther north, but plentiful in winter, when, however, it keeps at a distance from shore. Its only known Icelandic breeding-place is on Grímsey, but it is possible that there are others. Not uncommonly driven inland, as in England, by fierce storms.

The single egg is large for the size of the bird (nearly two inches long), pale bluish green, with sometimes faint spots and scribblings of red-grey; it is placed in a hole in the ground, in a burrow excavated by the bird, or amongst loose stones. I append a quaint extract from Proctor's MS. Journal: 'Tuesday 3d (of July 1837) I went in surch of the Little Auk's eggs etc. I got a fue with the bird they buld—or rather lay ther single egg a mong the large Stones—the egg is of a skim milk or light blue colour.'

The bird is nearly black on the upper parts, including the head and neck, white underneath. In winter the chin and throat turn white. Length 8½ inches, wing 4½ inches. There is a certain resemblance between this bird and immature Puffins, and the latter often get reported as Little Auks in England. The food consists usually of small oceanic crustacea, etc., but they will eat little fish when they can get them, and fish refuse thrown away by man.

Fratercula arctica (Linn.). Puffin.

Native name: 'Lundi' (whence our Lund-y = 'ey').

Resident in large numbers, breeding in colonies on turf-covered islands and stacks, and in cracks in sea-cliffs; in the former case the bird excavates a burrow, at the end of which it deposits its single rough white egg, faintly spotted and scribbled with grey-brown, and $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches long.

The bird is grey-brown above, with a black cap and ring round the neck; sides of the face light grey, rest of underparts white. Length 12 inches, wing 6 inches. The bill is very large and of a grey colour, with several yellow ridges and a bright red tip. In winter a large horny sheath, which forms in summer the covering of the base of the bill, is moulted off. Young birds are smaller and duskier, and take some time to arrive at their full size.

The food is generally small fish, which the bird often travels immense distances to find, also small oceanic crustacea and 'various.' Puffins are eaten a good deal in Iceland. There is a special clause in the Close Time Act on their behalf, prohibiting the use of nets and guns for taking them; the reason being that the young birds flock together, and can be driven into nets wholesale. At one time they got quite scarce in the Westmann Islands through these means.

Herra Gröndal relates a curious tale (*Verzeichniss*, p. 367), how it is possible in August and September to

H. N. Dugmore. *Photo.*

Nest of Great Northern Diver

Rjettarvatn, Arnarvatnsheiði.

draw a young Puffin out of a burrow with a hook, and find that a whole string of them is by this means brought to the day, each one hanging on by his bill to the tail of the one in front. It sounds rather Munchausenesque, somehow.

The late W. Proctor had several examples sent to him of the large Spitzbergen race of Puffin, which has been named *F. glacialis*, Naum., but the specific distinctness of which is not acknowledged nowadays. It is probable that this large race is to be found, round the northern coasts especially, every winter. (See *Ibis*, 1864, p. 132.) Native Iceland Puffins are, in their turn, rather larger than English ones.

Colymbus glacialis, Linn.

Great Northern Diver.

Native names: 'Himbrimi,' related to our 'Imber-Goose' of old literature, and to the Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian names for this bird; 'himbrin' of the Younger Edda; but the etymology of this name, though variously explained, seems quite obscure. 'Brúsi,' equally obscure in derivation; the word means an earthenware jug, but it seems probable that the name is rather borrowed from a demon Brúsi of the Orms Th. Stórólfssonar Saga, on account of the weird laugh which the bird's note resembles.

Resident in considerable numbers, Iceland being the breeding headquarters of this species as far as Europe

is concerned. A pair breeds on the majority of the hill-tarns and lakes which contain fish—very rarely, two pairs are to be seen on the same lake. Lives on the sea during the rest of the year, and feeds exclusively on fish.

The nest is placed on an islet in a lake, or at the end of a spit of land projecting from the mainland; it hardly amounts to a hollow in the ground, but is usually garnished with a little dead water-weed or grass. The two eggs vary from dark brown to deep olivaceous, more or less spotted with black, and are 3½ inches long.

The bird in summer is black above, white below, with purple and green sheen on the neck, and two transverse black bars across the black-streaked throat; back beautifully marbled with white. Length 30 to 35 inches, wing 13 to 14½ inches; the males considerably the larger, and often, indeed, than one another. Two shot the same day, which were paying attentions to the same lady, weighed 10½ and 13 lbs. respectively. Females and young birds in the winter only scale about 8 lbs.; at this season the black bars on the neck are lost, and the young birds are very dusky grey all over, darker on the upper parts.

The diving powers of this species are remarkable, and also its speed under water: I have seen it traverse what I feel certain was fully half a mile below the surface, in an incredibly short space of time. It is not easy to procure specimens on the water, but it may be done by taking an individual and rowing after

it persistently, firing at any range the moment it emerges, and thus exhausting it by making it dive before it has replenished its reserve of air. Sometimes it gives you a good overhead chance, as it flies from one lake to another for feeding purposes.

As well as the characteristic laugh, usually heard when the bird is on the wing, this Diver utters a hoarse croak on the water when its nest is approached.

Herra Gröndal informed me that Dr. Riemschneider of Dorpat has reported the Black-throated Diver (*C. arcticus*, L.) as seen by him on Mývatn. It is a pretty abundant breeder on the hill-tarns of Norway, and not very unlikely, therefore, to occur in Iceland; but, as it was not shot, and as it very much resembles the present species, I hardly like to admit it to the list as yet. It is rather smaller than the Great Northern (length about 26 inches, wing 11½ inches), and has a light-grey head and hind neck with a black chin and throat in summer, and no transverse bars on the latter as in the present species.

Colymbus septentrionalis, Linn.

RED-THROATED DIVER.

Native name: 'Lomur' (Loom), dating back to the Younger Edda; 'þerri-kráka.'

Resident and pretty common, breeding on many tarns and most lakes, and passing the winter on the sea, coming more into the fjords and near the mouths of rivers than the last species does.

The eggs are placed on the bare ground on the margin of a lake or on a spit in a marsh or tarn adjacent to a lake, less commonly on an islet. The two eggs are elliptical, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, olive or brown in colour, spotted with black, chiefly near the larger end.

The bird is grey-brown above, spotted finely with white, and white below; the sides of the neck are of a delicate French grey and the throat chestnut. Length 23 inches, wing 11 inches; the females rather smaller. The red throat is lost during the winter, and young birds at that time have, as well as white throats, the feathers of the upper parts edged with dirty white.

The food consists of fish, and this bird is a very expert diver, like the last species, but more inclined to take wing when pressed than that bird. It utters on the wing a harsh note between a bark and a laugh, and often flies about, vociferating, on the approach of a storm. Yet the Icelanders used to call it þerri-kráka = 'dry (weather) crow,' while our forefathers called it 'Rain-goose'!

Podicipes griseigena (Bodd.).

Red-necked Grebe.

Native name: 'Sefönd' (partim) = 'Reed-duck.'

Herra Gröndal records one occurrence of the Red-necked Grebe (*Skýrsla*, p. 52); it was shot at Keflavik in December 1885, a male in winter dress, and no doubt, though he does not add this information, on

the sea. It is not an unlikely species to occur in winter, at which time of the year it is marine in its habits, and a great wanderer, not very uncommon off the British coasts. It breeds abundantly in Southern Scandinavia, up to the head of the Gulf of Bothnia, and in Russia up to Archangel. It is larger than the Sclavonian Grebe, adults measuring 16½ inches in length, and 7 inches in the wing. In summer dress it is hardly likely to occur in Iceland; in winter plumage it is brown above and silvery below, old birds nearly always retaining some traces of the red throat of summer dress. Even in summer it has no prominent ear-tufts, like most Grebes, but a black crown bordered with white, and a conspicuous light grey patch on the chin and sides of face, and, of course, a chestnut-red neck.

Podicipes auritus (Linn.).

SCLAVONIAN OR HORNED GREBE

(=*P. cornutus*, Gm.).

Native names: 'Seföndd (partim), 'Flóaskítur,' 'Flóðskítur'; the last two have reference to 'flow' and 'flood,' *i.e.* marsh and pool, and are hardly ever used.

A summer visitor in considerable numbers to the north and west, less abundantly elsewhere. I cannot ascertain if any remain for the winter; it is not unlikely that some may do so in the sea round the southern coasts.

The nest is a loose structure of weeds, etc. (*myriophyllum* being a favourite material), floating amongst sedges and *scirpus*, to which it is attached, at the margin of a lake or tarn. The eggs, two to four in number, are bluish white when fresh, but soon get permanently stained by dirty feet and by the wet decayed weed with which they are frequently covered up. A storm of wind often destroys numbers of them, by upsetting them from the nest; one day we gathered a great quantity from the bottom of a lake, where they had been deposited by the action of the waves, and many subsequently split by the action of the water. The eggs vary in length from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

The bird is dark brown above, silvery grey below; neck, breast, and sides chestnut; a tuft of elongated chestnut feathers on the sides of the head forming a sort of crest (this, and the chestnut colour generally, is mostly lost in winter dress). Bill stoutish and straight. Length $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches, wing $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches; young birds a good deal smaller. The secondary quills of the wing are chiefly white in this bird, except the three outer ones next the primaries, which, like the latter, are dusky.

Food, small fish, and any small aquatic creatures. I have found water-snails amongst the swallowed food in Iceland.

[**Podicipes nigricollis** (Brehm).
Black-necked or Eared Grebe.

Native names: 'Sefönd' (partim), and, according to Gröndal, 'Flórgoði' and 'Flóra.'

There has been grievous confusion between this bird and the last, owing to the use of *P. auritus* by Gmelin, Latham, etc., as a name for this bird, it having previously been given by Linnæus to the Sclavonian. I cannot satisfy myself that this species really occurs in Iceland, which, indeed, it is not likely to do, as its range in Europe is southern, and the centre of it nearer to the Mediterranean than the North Atlantic. I have seen hundreds of Sclavonian Grebes in Iceland, but though I habitually examine with glasses every Grebe I meet in that country, I have never been able to detect one of the present species. Faber described it, however, as common in the north and west, especially at Mývatn (where there are numbers of the Sclavonian), and every one, almost, has followed his lead. Young Sclavonians are very much smaller than adults, and this has, I think, been a factor in the confusion. I do not assert that *P. nigricollis* does not occur, but only that I can find no satisfactory proof of it doing so. It is a smaller bird (length 12 inches, wing 5 inches), the head and neck in summer are *black*, with a small tuft of golden-red feathers behind the eye; the flanks are dull chestnut; the secondaries are entirely white, and there is a good deal of this colour on the three or four inner-

most primaries. The bill also is slender, slightly turned upwards, and this mark will be visible a long way off.]

Fulmarus glacialis (Linn.). FULMAR.

Native names: 'Fýll,' 'Fíll,' 'Fýlungr,' 'Fýlingr,' 'Fýlungi.' It should be spelt 'fy-', not 'fi-', as it is apparently from 'fúll'='lazy,' and the terminations 'ungr,' etc., probably='young.' The name 'Fúlmár' is also used, and occurs in the Hallfreðar Saga.

Resident and abundant all round the coasts, breeding in colonies here and there, as in the Vestmannaeyjar and at Grímsey, etc. Its stiff and ungraceful, but apparently almost effortless flight is a common, and sometimes the only, object visible from the steamers to and from Iceland.

The single egg is laid on a cliff-ledge, or a turf area in the middle of a cliff; it is white (to begin with), rough in texture, with a persistent musky smell, and variable in size—my own specimens (from Grímsey) vary from $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches to nearly $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length.

The Fulmar is silvery white, with grey mantle and tail, and sooty flight-feathers; bill yellow, with dark nostril-tubes along its upper ridge. Length 19 inches, wing $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Flight stiff, by which the bird may be distinguished from a gull a mile off, or more.

Occasionally one of the 'dark form' of Fulmar may be seen; it is of a dusky grey all over, and Professor

Newton states that on Grímsey it is known as the 'Smiður' (Blacksmith). It seems very exceptional in Iceland, however, in summer, and I have only noticed two or three. In considering this phenomenon, it should be borne in mind that immature Fulmars are duskier than adults.

† **Puffinus major,** Faber.
GREATER SHEARWATER.

Native names: 'Skrófa,' 'Stóra Skrófa.'

A rare vagrant, extending its wanderings to the North Atlantic, even as far as Greenland, where it was reported by Reinhardt (but without sufficient evidence) to breed. Its breeding-grounds are somewhat of a mystery, and it is more than doubtful if it breeds in the Northern Hemisphere at all. First recorded from Iceland by Faber (*Prodromus*, pp. 56-57), and no one appears to have seen it since. It occurs oftener on the American side.

The bird is brown above, darker on the crown, and paler on the back of the neck; feathers of the mantle and tail-coverts with whitish tips; tail and wing quills nearly black; underparts white with a dusky middle to the abdomen. Length 18½ inches, wing about 13 inches.

[**Puffinus griseus** (Gmel.).
Sooty Shearwater.

Native name: 'Skrófa,' no doubt.

I am responsible for the appearance of this bird in the Iceland list, having seen from the deck of the *Thyra* (D.M.S.) on July 25, 1894, about sixty miles south-east of Eskifjörðr, a bird I could put down as nothing else. It flew, or glided, round the ship all the morning, several times within a few yards of where I leant on the taffrail watching it, and once or twice near enough, I believe, for me to have caught it with a butterfly net. I put it down as about a foot long (its head being then drawn in on the shoulders in flight), and about two in expanse of wing. Colour sooty black all over; bill long, slender, and much hooked at the tip. This is, in reality, rather an under-estimate of the size of the Sooty Shearwater, which is 17 inches long (extended), and has a wing of about 13 inches. A few days later I saw another in the Axarfjörðr (north-east), and an observant fellow-passenger, to whom I pointed it out, assured me afterwards that he had seen another a few days later still, on the west coast, from the same ship.

It is not unlikely to occur as a rare straggler, as it has been noticed in the Faeroes, and is not uncommon on the North American fishing-banks. My surmise (*Zoölogist*, 1895, p. 24) that it might possibly breed in Iceland is, however, an unjustifiable one, as

the breeding-grounds of this species, as far as they are known, are in the Southern Hemisphere (*e.g.* the Chatham Isles, off the east coast of New Zealand). The fishermen off Iceland should be induced to collect specimens of the various 'Scrófas,' as definite information upon them is much wanted.]

Puffinus anglorum (Ray).

Manx Shearwater.

Native name: 'Litla Skrófa.' The meaning of this name is obscure; 'skrof' means 'loose ice.'

Resident, breeding in the Vestmannaeyjar in some numbers, and probably in smaller colonies on the west and north coasts also. It excavates a burrow in the turf, and lines the far end of it with grass, on which it deposits a single white egg nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. It chooses the turf of a small sea island, or the level patches which are found here and there on the face of cliffs, for nidification.

The bird has the crown, back of the neck, and upper parts of a sooty brown, underparts white, with dusky scribblings on the sides of the neck and breast. Length 15 inches, wing $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches. It feeds on fish, and anything small it can catch, or find dead, on the surface of the sea.

[**Cymochorea leucorrhoa** (Vieill.).
FORK-TAILED PETREL.

A somewhat larger bird than the following, with a longer bill and forked tail, which has been reported from Iceland (*Verzeichniss*, p. 370 ; also, *Skýrsla*, p. 46). It has occurred in Greenland, and is more abundant on the west side of the Atlantic. The general coloration is the same as that of the Storm Petrel, and the length is 8 inches, wing 6 inches.]

Procellaria pelagica, Linn. STORM PETREL.

Native name: 'Druði' (?)

Very plentiful all round the coasts, especially in the south, but is not known, so far, to breed in Iceland, though it breeds abundantly in the Faeroes, whence the late Sysselmand Müller gave me a number of eggs. I think it probable that it may be found to breed in Iceland. Its nest should be looked for in stone heaps, and under boulders and in cracks of rocks—occasionally it makes a burrow for itself in the turf—and generally collects a little dead grass for lining. Small islands are a very favourite breeding-place. The single egg is white, sometimes faintly spotted, or even zoned, with light red, and about $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches long. Storm Petrels are late breeders, and eggs are hardly likely to be found in Iceland till quite the end of June.

The bird distantly suggests a House Martin when on the wing, and is sooty-black all over, including the bill

and feet, with a white patch over the tail, and suggestions of white margins to the wing-coverts. Length 6 inches, wing 4½ inches. Tail not forked at the end. Gröndal records that a specimen was picked up in a meadow at Uthlið in the south-east, some eight to ten geographical miles inland, in June 1885, and that he obtained the skin. The Storm Petrel feeds on small crustacea, mollusca, and any marine animal matter which it can manage to swallow, and often, as is well known, follows ships.

[**Diomedea** (**melanophrys**, Boie).

Herra Gröndal (*Verzeichniss*, p. 369) mentions an Albatross, which he designates as *D. chlororhynchus*, Temm., as being shot on the Vestmannaeyjar forty years back, which would bring the date to about 1845; he adds that the skeleton is now in the Zoölogical Museum at Copenhagen. In *Skýrsla* he repeats this statement, with the exception that he corrects the name to *D. culminata*, Gould.

In the *Zoölogist* (1894, p. 337) will be found an account by Mr. Harvie-Brown of a specimen of *D. melanophrys*, of Boie, shot on the Faeroes and now at Copenhagen. Several specimens of this species have been obtained at different times in the North Atlantic, and I think it best to put the Iceland bird down, provisionally, as being of the same species. As is well known, the albatrosses are inhabitants of warm, southern oceans, but this species seems to stray oftener than others to our latitudes.]

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